

Journal of European Baptist Studies

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Nordenhaug lecture 2018

Dr Reggie Williams will deliver the Nordenhaug lecture on 19th of November (and not the 20th as previously advertised) at the Baptist House, Amsterdam.

For the first time this year we will be streaming the Nordenhaug lecture live online. Please let us know if you can join us for this event on Monday 19th November at 10:30 Amsterdam time. We hope that this will be the first of many occasions in which the research community from around the world will be able to participate in a Baptist House based event.

Dr Williams will deliver a lecture on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, exploring Bonhoeffer's development from a proto-nationalist to Nazi opponent. Dr Williams's lecture will speak to Christian leadership and responses in the context of resurgent European nationalisms. There is no charge for attendance at the lecture which will run from 10:30-11:30 with discussion from 11:30-12:00 (Amsterdam time).

From 13:30 on the same day Dr Williams will be the keynote speaker for the McClendon lecture and will be joined by Professors Nancey Murphy and Henk Bakker as respondents. In this lecture he will take the theme Reading Lives as Sacred Text: The Incarnational Ethics of Martin Luther King Jr., Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Harriet Tubman.

If you plan to attend or join us online please let us know by emailing administrator@ibts.eu

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Editorial

Presented here are four historical analyses of events within Baptist history, with lively and varied discussion about their implications for theology within the Baptist tradition, for ecclesial practices, and practical expressions of the love and care of God towards those who have been in some way disadvantaged in society.

Appropriately the series begins with Lon Graham's analysis of an episode of conflict between the pioneer missionary William Carey and the high Calvinist John C. Ryland. By drawing on available evidence, Graham suggests that this was not a fundamental conflict between missionary enthusiasm on the one hand and a 'stodgy, anti-missions' position on the other but might be better understood as a simple relational clash that took place at the end of an association meeting. Graham's careful guidance through the historical material steers us away from the dramatic conclusions that tend towards binary opposition between the 'junior' mission enthusiast and 'senior' theologian. He reminds us that if the church is to be effective in the world then it needs to step back from the tendency to indulge in stereotype-fuelled division and, through thoughtful reflection, keep events in perspective and be respectful of others.

The mission theme is continued in Arjen Stellingwerf's discussion of the 1881 revival in Weerdingemond in The Netherlands. Stellingwerf draws our attention to the particular social and geographical context of the revival and the consequential impact on the impoverished peat diggers employed in the Weerdingemond region. In doing so he conveys the messy reality of the revival experience; this was no idealised heavenly blessing which lifted people above the struggles of poverty and class, rather it is an account of ministers and congregations struggling in harsh physical and social conditions to somehow embody the hopeful message of Spirit inspired conversion to Christ.

Conversion, or 'saving faith', is the subject of Johannes Steenbuch's article examining the development by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Baptists of the 'doctrine of justification from eternity'. The doctrine stood against an 'over-emphasis on repentance in Puritan and missional conceptions of faith' and asserts that 'justification is a fact prior to repentance and faith'. Steenbuch's careful historical analysis of the development of this doctrine, especially with regard to its influence on Baptist theology, map out for us the changing contours of Baptist soteriology over two centuries. Steenbuch's contemporary interpretation of the doctrine that 'we are always already loved' brings home the truth that this is no detached theology, but one with profound and practical implications for contemporary mission.

In this sense Steenbuch's argument provides an interesting conversation partner with both the articles that precede and follow it. Steenbuch's insight that 'we are always already loved' presents a provocative counter point to Stellingwerf's account of revival amongst the poverty-stricken peat workers who were compelled to respond to the call of conversion by 'the forceful character of Horn's speeches and his emphasis on instantaneous decisions'. Equally stimulating is the resonance it finds with Faith Bowers' questions about the place of those with learning disabilities within Baptist congregations; for example, her question about how intellectual impairment affects access to baptism, communion, and church membership.

Faith Bowers draws on more recent history to discuss the Baptist Union of Great Britain's response to people with learning difficulties within their congregations from 1983 onwards. The early 1980s was a time of dramatic change in policy towards the care of those with mental ill health. I had first-hand experience of this in 1983 during a one-year position in a Victorian-style 'lunatic asylum'. Patients were being decanted into the community so that only the most elderly and institutionalised remained in residential care – in our case still numbering 800 patients. As Bowers indicates, the challenge for religious and community organisations, including Baptist churches, was considerable. Responses were often formulated at a local level as individual congregations and organisations tried to adapt to the new situation. Bowers' personal experience of living with a son with Down's Syndrome brings her enquiry alive, especially in relating the painful struggle experienced as family members, carers, and theologians tried to engage with questions of theology and ecclesiology which had profound bearing for those with learning difficulties.

It is often the case that surprising insight arises through the happenstance of circumstances and connections. The proximity of different voices and diverse arguments often seem to evoke fresh resonances and bring into view deeper understanding. Whilst each of them brings their own unique perspective, when taken together and brought into conversation these four articles seem indeed to raise fresh questions which take us beyond the those offered by the individual pieces themselves. Such questions might be, for example, around the tensions experienced between a formal or academic theological position and the operant theology of a revival meeting or Baptist congregation, or about the interplay between tradition and practice that arises because of social change. Whichever way you approach the reading, we trust that you will find it stimulating and enjoyable.

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DR KEN ROXBURGH
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First lecture 14.00

Discerning the mind of Christ: Southern Culture and churches
in the 20th and 21st centuries

Coffee break 15.15-15.45

Second lecture 15.45

Discerning the mind of Christ: Southside Baptist Church,
Birmingham, Alabama in the 20th and 21st centuries

PLEASE REGISTER FOR THE LECTURES BEFORE 15 JANUARY 2019:
MARIANNE VAN ZWIETEN - ADMINISTRATOR@IBTS.EU

A Showdown or a Put Down? Rethinking an Incident from Early Baptist Mission History

Lon Graham

Introduction

The first days of a successful movement often become clouded with competing interpretations as people come to understand earlier events in light of later success. The early days of the Baptist Missionary Society and its first missionary, William Carey, are no different. Specifically, the story of a senior minister rebuking Carey for advocating taking the gospel to unbelievers of distant lands has been retold repeatedly as the triumph of the burgeoning missionary spirit over against a moribund high Calvinism.¹ The popularity of the story, however, belies a history of conflicting interpretations. It is recounted in almost every biography of Carey,² as well as in histories of the Baptist Missionary Society.³ While they are largely agreed that something happened in that meeting, with one notable exception, that is often where their agreement ends. They differ as to dates⁴ and even the participants themselves.⁵ The chief difference, however, has to do with content: what was said and what did it mean? This article will examine the ways that this episode of missionary history has been understood and seek to discern the most appropriate way of interpreting it in light of the available evidence.

¹ This essay will use the historically accurate ‘high Calvinism’ instead of ‘hyper-Calvinism’.

² Including but not limited to those by Samuel Pearce Carey, *William Carey, D.D: Fellow of Linnaean Society* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), pp. 50-51; Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991), p. 53; and John Clark Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission, Volume 1* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), p. 10.

³ See F.A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1842* (Boston: William S. Damrell, 1845), p. 11, and Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), pp. 6-7.

⁴ Dates include 1785 (Michael A.G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends and His Times* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994), p. 195); 1786 (John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated, in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society* (London: Button and Son, 1816), p. 175); and 1787 (C. Douglas Weaver, *In Search of the New Testament Church: The Baptist Story* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008), p. 219).

⁵ F. Deaville Walker held that John Ryland Jr, one of Carey’s greatest supporters as a co-founder of the Baptist Missionary Society, was actually Carey’s opponent that day (F. Deaville Walker, *William Carey: Missionary Pioneer and Statesman* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1926), pp. 62-63).

Anatomy of a Showdown: Shaping the Story

The first account of this event was published in 1815 by John Webster Morris,⁶ who wrote that, after the official work of the Northamptonshire Association had finished for the day, the ministers were engaged in a relaxed conversation with one another. John Collett Ryland, a respected senior minister, then entered the room and asked that two junior ministers, one of whom was Carey, offer a question for the group to consider. After some prompting, Carey offered his suggestion: ‘Whether the command given to the apostles to “teach all nations” was not obligatory on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent.’⁷ Ryland’s response was immediate. He told Carey that ‘certainly nothing could be done before another Pentecost, when an effusion of miraculous gifts, including the gift of tongues, would give effect to the Commission of Christ as at first,’ and concluded that Carey was ‘a most miserable enthusiast for asking such a question!’⁸ Ryland’s rebuke ended the discussion and left Carey ‘greatly abashed and mortified’ but undeterred in his commitment to the missionary task.⁹

The first rival ‘interpretation’ of the event came in 1817 with the publication of a biography of Andrew Fuller written by John Ryland Jr, the son of John Collett Ryland. Ryland Jr dismisses the story as ‘an ill-natured anecdote’,¹⁰ rejecting it on three separate grounds. First, he says that he was present at the meeting and does not remember that particular conversation happening; rather, Ryland Jr cites the diary of Andrew Fuller, in which Fuller writes that the ministers discussed the lack of ministerial success and its causes¹¹ as well as the sufficient call required to introduce village preaching.¹² Second, he says that his father left Northampton before the end of 1786, which was when Morris indicated that the meeting took place, meaning Morris not only has the content wrong but the dates as well.¹³ Third, Ryland Jr contends that he never heard such sentiments as were recorded in

⁶ John Webster Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society*, 1st edn (London: Hamilton, 1815), pp. 96-97.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Ryland, *Work of Faith*, p. 175. Ryland Jr also includes many extracts from Fuller’s diary, including Fuller’s account of this particular ministers’ meeting. According to his memoirs, Fuller remembered the day quite well and mentions nothing about the Ryland Sr–Carey confrontation (*Ibid.*, p. 174).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 175. Fuller seems to recall well the conversations of that day, as he not only includes details of them but holds that they were ‘the best part of the day’ (*Ibid.*, p. 173).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 175. Ryland Jr’s contention regarding his father leaving Northampton is corroborated in Ryland Jr’s diary, in which he says of his father that he ‘went to London, Nov. 11, 1785, and never return’d to Northampton, till he was bro’t down to be buried’. John Ryland Jr, ‘Autograph Reminiscences’, Bristol Baptist College Library, 11. As will be seen below, there is some confusion as to the date of the meeting.

Morris' account.¹⁴ Ryland Jr says of his father, 'No man prayed and preached about the latter-day glory more than my father.'¹⁵ Far from reproaching Carey, Ryland Jr seems to insinuate that his father would have supported the coming of the latter-day glory in a renewed missionary impulse.¹⁶

Morris responded to Ryland Jr in a second edition of his own biography of Fuller, adding details that were missing in the original telling, such as Ryland Sr's reference to Carey learning foreign languages and the place of the meeting being the house of Mr. Trinder.¹⁷ Addressing Ryland Jr's objection directly, Morris is adamant that the event occurred as he previously declared, writing that Ryland's inability to remember the event does not mitigate against its veracity,¹⁸ and that, while Ryland Sr had indeed left Northampton, he returned to the area for this particular meeting.¹⁹ He also chastised Ryland Jr for neglecting to appeal to Carey himself, who 'would be able to corroborate the truth of the narrative'.²⁰ Morris' response carried the day and went unchallenged until the publication of Joseph Belcher's biography of Carey in 1853.²¹

The Belcher account changes the general atmosphere and even the substance of the episode.²² Gone is Carey's gentle suggestion of a topic of conversation, replaced with an epoch-defining showdown between the mission-minded Carey and the high Calvinist J.C. Ryland, sparked by a bold question spoken from the mouth of a 'diffident' youth: 'Have the churches done all that they ought to have done for heathen nations?'²³ Ryland Sr also appears more nefarious and reactionary in this account. Belcher records that

the old minister ... awfully afraid of some new-fangled fanaticism, sprang on his feet, and with eyes flashing like lightning, and in tones resembling thunder, cried out, "Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen world, he will do it without your help or mine either."²⁴

¹⁴ Ryland, *Work of Faith*, p. 175.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ryland Jr goes on to discuss some of the finer points of his father's eschatology, arguing that his views did not place any impediment in the way of spreading the gospel abroad (*Ibid.*, p. 175).

¹⁷ John Webster Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society*, New Edition, Enlarged and Corrected (London: Wightman and Cramp, 1826), pp. 101-102.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁰ *Ibid.* It should be pointed out that Morris published his rebuttal to Ryland Jr a year after Ryland Jr passed away, so that he was obviously unable to give any further answer.

²¹ Joseph Belcher, *William Carey: A Biography* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1853). Ryland was unable to respond to Morris' rebuttal, as he had died the year prior to the publication of the New Edition of Morris' biography of Fuller.

²² Some scholars, most notably Haykin (Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, p. 195), have attributed this account to John Clark Marshman, but his account was published in 1859, while Belcher's was published in 1853. It would seem that Marshman was dependent on Belcher, rather than the other way around (cf. Stanley, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, p. 7n14).

²³ Belcher, *William Carey*, p. 19.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

While Belcher does not mention high Calvinism by name, the quotation attributed to Ryland Sr would have no doubt been intended to communicate its baser qualities.²⁵ To be fair, the high Calvinism of the Belcher account would not be out of place in Ryland Sr's mouth, for he held to such sentiments.²⁶ Because of this seeming match between the man and story, the content and tone of the Belcher version became the *de facto* reading of the event through the rest of the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century.²⁷

These are the three main interpretations of the event: Morris, Ryland Jr, and Belcher.²⁸ It remains to adjudicate between these competing claims.

Adjudicating Competing Claims

Rejecting Belcher

Although Belcher's account held sway for many years, the 1980s saw scholars begin to show increasing uncertainty with regard to Belcher and the popular interpretation.²⁹ While Brian Stanley was among the first to offer strong doubts as to the authenticity of the Belcher account,³⁰ Michael Haykin's reading has become typical of modern scholars. Haykin marshals the work of Eustace Carey, Joshua Marshman, and even Morris' opponent Ryland Jr in favour of something resembling the earliest account,³¹ though he departs from Morris in holding that the event occurred not in 1786 but the year before, specifically, on 30 September 1785.³² Haykin believes that

²⁵ He later makes the connection explicit by referring to the 'False Calvinism' that had 'paralyzed Christian zeal'. *Ibid.*, p. 49. Moreover, the denial of the free offer of the gospel and of the need to preach the gospel for the sake of conversion of sinners was a central tenet of high Calvinism. See Keith S. Grant, *Andrew Fuller and the Evangelical Renewal of Pastoral Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013), pp. 42–45.

²⁶ See his definition of the gospel written for his personal theological dictionary: 'The word *offer* is not so proper as declaration, proposal, or gift'. William Newman, *Rylandiana* (London: George Wightman, 1835), p. 50.

²⁷ It was not until van den Berg in 1956 that the adjective 'alleged' was added to the story. Johannes van den Berg, *Constrained by Jesus' Love: An Inquiry Into the Motives of the Missionary Awakening in Great Britain in the Period Between 1698 and 1815* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1956), p. 127.

²⁸ Though many scholars disregard Ryland Jr's interpretation, in view of the facts that he was present at the meeting and his account of the day comes shortly after that of Morris and well before that of Belcher, Ryland Jr's voice is worth hearing.

²⁹ The 'alleged' of van den Berg was followed by others such as Thomas McKibbens, *The Forgotten Heritage: A Lineage of Great Baptist Preaching* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1986), p. 58 and Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), p. 158.

³⁰ Stanley, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, p. 7.

³¹ Eustace Carey was William Carey's nephew, while Joshua Marshman was one of the Serampore Trio along with Carey and William Ward. Haykin rejects Ryland Jr's contention that the event did not happen, but he takes into account Ryland Jr's belief that it could not have happened in 1786, since his father had left the area by that time.

³² Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, p. 195. Morris shows some uncertainty in dating the event, saying that it happened 'before the end 1786'. Morris, *Andrew Fuller*, p. 96. Ryland Jr is confident that it could not have happened in 1785, and Morris, perhaps unwittingly, lends credence to this contention when he says that Ryland Sr left Northampton and returned for this particular meeting (we know that Ryland Sr left

Carey's own memory of the event and Ryland Sr's character speak in favour of Morris. Concerning Carey's recollection of the event, two pieces of evidence are adduced. First, in a letter dated 23 May, 1832, Joshua Marshman recounts a conversation with Carey regarding the early days of the Baptist mission. Carey described his feelings about 'the heathen' and mentioned a time when 'good old John Ryland (the Doctor's father) denounced them [Carey's feelings] as unscriptural'.³³ Second, at an earlier date, though published four years after Marshman's letter, Carey recalled Ryland Sr's objections to his nephew, Eustace, who writes that his uncle confirmed the general contours of Morris' account, saying that Carey communicated to him that some 'strong epithet' was indeed used against him by the elder Ryland.³⁴ Regarding the character of Ryland Sr, both Eustace Carey and Haykin point out that Morris' account is consistent with Ryland Sr's 'characteristic vehemence'³⁵ in speaking his mind. Carey's memory and the character of Ryland Sr combine to assure Haykin, and those who follow in his general interpretation of the event, that 'the elder Ryland [...] did indeed administer a sizzling rebuke to Carey'.³⁶

While Haykin leans heavily on the Morris account, he offers no specific argument against Belcher. Indeed, if Belcher is addressed at all, it is simply to dismiss him as unreliable.³⁷ While Belcher may be much later and much more dramatic, and while that may lead some to dismiss him, it remains to build a firmer case against him. The first historical argument against Belcher has to do with the status of the 'modern question' in the Northamptonshire Association in 1785. By that year, the Association had largely answered the 'modern question' as to the use of means to convert unbelievers.³⁸ While it would be inaccurate to say that the affirmative side had won completely, the presence in the Association of Robert Hall Sr, author of the seminal *Help to Zion's Travelers*; Andrew Fuller, who was soon to publish *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*; and Ryland's own son, who had already rejected high Calvinism and was Ryland Sr's associate

Northampton in November 1785). However, in the absence of any further documentation regarding the date of the meeting, the preponderance of the evidence indicates that Haykin is correct in his dating.

³³ *Periodical Accounts of the Serampore Mission: New Series: Vol I: From January 1827 to December 1833 Inclusive* (London: Parbury, Allen, and Co., 1834), p. 639. Haykin takes this to refer to the incident at the ministers' meeting, although it should be noted that Marshman does not specify this and, in fact, groups Ryland Sr's objection to Carey together with Andrew Fuller's hesitancy to follow Carey (*Ibid.*).

³⁴ Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1836), p. 54.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul*, p. 196.

³⁷ See Stanley's quick dismissal, in a footnote, of Belcher's account: 'there must be some doubt about its authenticity'. Stanley, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, p. 7n14.

³⁸ For more on the 'modern question' in Northamptonshire, see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Northamptonshire and "The Modern Question": A Turning-Point in Eighteenth-Century Dissent', *The Journal of Theological Studies* 16 (1) (April 1965), 101-23. Ryland Jr wrote a summary of the Modern Question in his memoir of Fuller (Ryland, *Work of Faith*, 6-11). His answer to the Modern Question is indicative of the new movement in Northampton and elsewhere – see Ryland, *Serious Remarks*, 8-26.

minister at College Lane, would indicate that the question was no longer a hotly-debated one during Association meetings. While this does not prove that Ryland Sr would have remained quiet at this particular meeting, it shows that Belcher did not take into account the nuances of Particular Baptist church and denominational life in his account, nuances that would speak against his dramatic description.

In addition, while it is true that J.C. Ryland held high Calvinist sentiments, he was neither a narrow-minded sectarian nor was he anti-missions. His friendships with such men as the evangelist George Whitefield³⁹ and the Anglican James Hervey⁴⁰ indicate that he was willing to embrace as Christian brethren men who held convictions different from his. Moreover, his commitment to the tenets of high Calvinism did not deter him from a warm concern for unbelievers nor did it keep him from proclaiming the gospel to them. He wrote in his diary on 23 October, 1766 that, in his seven years at College Lane, 'God has remarkably blessed my imperfect labours for the conversion and comfort of immortal souls.'⁴¹ Contrary to some conceptions of high Calvinists, Ryland Sr worked to the end that unbelievers be converted to the Christian faith; in a sermon on the occasion of his death, Robert Simpson spoke of 'his zeal and delight in the spread of the gospel'.⁴² Not only was denominational life more complicated than Belcher allowed, Ryland Sr himself was a much more complex man than Belcher's portrayal affords.

Not Soteriology but Eschatology?

In rejecting Belcher's account, recent interpreters have focused on eschatological issues raised by Ryland Sr's purported words in Morris' account,⁴³ which involve Ryland Sr's understanding of the book of Revelation. His interpretation of Revelation posits a largely chronological scheme: each church of Revelation 2–3, each trumpet, and each seal represents a period of church history. He believes that the church was, in his

³⁹ For which, see Grant Gordon, 'A Revealing Unpublished Letter of George Whitefield to John Collett Ryland', *Baptist Quarterly* 47 (2) (April 2016), 65–75.

⁴⁰ For which, see John Collett Ryland, *The Character of the Rev. James Hervey, M.A.* (London: W. Justins, 1790), especially the letters printed at the end of the book, pp. 3–99 and Appendix, iii–viii.

⁴¹ John Collett Ryland, cited in John Rippon, *The Gentle Dismission of Saints from Earth to Heaven: A Sermon Occasioned by the Decease of the Rev. John Ryland, Senior, M.A.* (London: Dilly, Otridge, Mathews, Button, Knott, 1792), p. 42.

⁴² Robert Simpson, cited in Newman, *Rylandiana*, pp. 23–24.

⁴³ See Thomas Nettles, 'Baptists and the Great Commission', in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, Martin Klauber and Scott Manetsch, eds. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008), pp. 89–107; and James M. Renihan, 'Out From Hyper-Calvinism: Andrew Fuller and the Promotion of Missions', *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 1 (1) (January 2004), 45–65.

day, in the Sardian state,⁴⁴ or in the stage of the sixth trumpet.⁴⁵ In this period, the state of the church is one that has come out of the ‘darkness of popery’ and awaits ‘a more glorious state’ to come.⁴⁶ This more glorious state is that of the Philadelphian church, in which Christ will reign spiritually, though not physically, on the earth. During this period, ‘an open door for the gospel will be set: it will be preached in its power and purity, and will be greatly succeeded’.⁴⁷ It is at this time, and not before, that the gospel will go to the nations and the fullness of the Gentiles will be brought in.⁴⁸

Ryland Sr is dependent upon John Gill for his eschatology. This is indicated in Ryland Jr’s defence of his father, not only in the son connecting his father’s end-time views to Gill but also in his reference to his father preaching about the ‘latter-day glory’. Ryland Sr does not refer to this period as the ‘latter-day glory’, but John Gill does.⁴⁹ The same chronological scheme found in Ryland Sr is seen also in Gill, though in more depth, and the same words are sometimes used. For example, Ryland Sr writes:

The characters Christ here assumes point at the holiness of life, truth of doctrine, and purity of discipline, for which this church state will be distinguished. In this period of time, an open door for the gospel will be set: it will be preached in its power and purity, and will be greatly succeeded. The fullness of the Gentiles will be brought in, and the Jews will be converted.⁵⁰

The similarities to Gill’s exposition are easily seen:

The characters Christ here assumes point at the holiness of life, truth of doctrine, and purity of discipline, for which this church state will be distinguished: in this period of time an open door for the Gospel will be set; it will be preached in its power and purity, and; will be greatly succeeded; the fulness of the Gentiles will be brought in, and the Jews will be converted.⁵¹

On this eschatological interpretation, Ryland Sr’s issue with Carey is not rooted in an aversion to the use of means in the conversion of unbelievers. Rather, it is whether the Christian has warrant to ‘send forth gospel laborers to the heathen world in the absence of a sure indication that the days of the ‘latter-day glory’ are upon us’.⁵² Because of his eschatological commitments, not necessarily his soteriological ones, this interpretation

⁴⁴ John Collett Ryland, *Contemplations on the Beauties of Creation, and on All the Principal Truths and Blessings of the Glorious Gospel with the Sin and Graces of Professing Christian* (Northampton: Thomas Dicey, 1779), p. 286.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 281-282.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 286.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 287.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ For more on Gill’s eschatology, see Barry H. Howson, ‘The Eschatology of the Calvinistic Baptist John Gill (1697–1771) Examined and Compared’, *Eusebeia* 5 (2005): 33-66.

⁵⁰ Ryland, *Contemplations*, p. 287.

⁵¹ John Gill, *Exposition of the Revelation of S. John the Divine* (London: George Keith, 1776), p. 41.

⁵² Nettles, ‘Baptists’, p. 90.

holds that Ryland Sr did not believe that Christians had such a warrant. Therefore, to argue otherwise, as Carey proposed, was misguided.⁵³

Again, the theology matches the man,⁵⁴ but that does not mean that the eschatological interpretation of Morris' account is correct. While some contend that 'the "latter-day" question was a matter of serious discussion'⁵⁵ in that day and in that place, it is not certain that this was truly the case. Indeed, the available evidence points in a different direction. For example, the famous 'prayer call' of 1784 was a product of the Northamptonshire Association.⁵⁶ In this call, the gathered ministers agreed to pray for worldwide revival: '[L]et the whole interest of the Redeemer be affectionately remembered, and the spread of the gospel to the most distant parts of the habitable globe be the object of your most fervent requests.'⁵⁷ The call was not merely to prayer but to action as well: 'We shall rejoice if *any other christian societies* of our own or other denominations will unite with us, and do now *invite them* most cordially to join heart and hand in the attempt.'⁵⁸ Ryland Sr was a member of the Association when the prayer call was issued⁵⁹ and would have agreed with its passing.⁶⁰ It would be strange indeed to agree with a call to fervent prayer and action for the conversion of the nations one year, and then to issue a stinging rebuke the next year to someone who suggested following through on that. This is not to say that Ryland Sr did not or could not say anything to Carey; it is, however, meant to suggest a context that is devoid of the animus present in Belcher and Morris as well as the interpretations built upon them.

⁵³ Carey disagreed with this understanding of Revelation: 'It has been said that some learned divines have proved from Scripture that the time is not yet come that the heathen should be converted; and that first the *witneffes must be slain*, and many other prophecies fulfilled. But admitting this to be the case (which I much doubt) yet if any objection is made from this against preaching to them immediately, it must be founded on one of these things...' and then he gives his objections. William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester: Ann Ireland, 1792), p. 12.

⁵⁴ It matches almost too closely. Morris' version of Carey's question for consideration is very close to Carey's central contention in his *Enquiry*, and Carey's *Enquiry* seems to answer Ryland Sr's purported objection nearly directly. While it is distinctly possible that the seed of a question in that ministers' meeting eventually bore the fruit of that book, the similarity between the question and the book is surely enough to give one pause to consider which came first.

⁵⁵ Nettles, 'Baptists', p. 90.

⁵⁶ For more information on the prayer call, see Michael A.G. Haykin, 'John Sutcliff and the Concert of Prayer', *Reformation and Revival* 1 (3) (Summer 1992), 65-88; E.A. Payne, *The Prayer Call of 1784* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1941); Peter Morden, 'Andrew Fuller: A Biographical Sketch', in 'At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word': *Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. Michael A.G. Haykin (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006): pp. 27-31.

⁵⁷ Northamptonshire Baptist Association, *Northampton Baptist Association Circular Letter 1784*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ His invitation to preach at the next Association meeting indicates his continued participation (*Ibid.*, p. 11).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12. It was passed unanimously.

A Put Down Rather Than a Showdown

Though different in content, emphases, and theology, both the Belcher and Morris accounts, and their consequent interpretations, share a common foundation: they assume that whatever Ryland Sr said should be taken at face value, as the serious words of a serious man. However, there is evidence that such an assumption would be a mistake. First, there has been an issue regarding what was actually said by Ryland Sr. While the Belcher account may be reasonably dismissed, this does not mean that the Morris account may stand as written. There are indications that Morris does not recall the event with a perfect memory. In an article that has mostly been overlooked by scholars, Morris writes a scathing response to John Dyer, who wrote that Carey ‘expressly denied the anecdote’.⁶¹ Morris adopts an angry tone in the article, accusing those who question his account of ‘disingenuousness’,⁶² being ‘ludicrous’,⁶³ and of ‘egregious stupidity’.⁶⁴ More to the point, Morris writes that Carey personally ‘fully confirmed’ the original account and even ‘enlarged’ it with new particulars that Morris had forgotten.⁶⁵ Carey’s confirmation came in a letter written to Morris, in which he states that he ‘perfectly well recollect[s]’ the request from Ryland Sr. He remembers the elder minister’s response:

I recollect proposing the question, and Mr. Ryland’s making some observations thereon, particularly that when the time for spreading the Gospel should come, God would infallibly direct his servants to the countries in which his elect lay; and that he quoted Paul’s not being suffered to preach the word in Bithynia.⁶⁶

No mention is made of a stinging rebuke or reproach. Carey also mentions that both Ryland Jr and Fuller made a response to Ryland Sr, but that he did ‘not recollect Mr. Ryland, sen. saying that nothing could be done before another Pentecost, or that I was a miserable enthusiast for proposing such a question’.⁶⁷ While Morris sees this letter as confirmation and vindication, it would seem as though Carey’s memory of the event is not entirely in agreement with Morris’ original account and, in fact, is at odds with it at two important points, namely, the reference to a second Pentecost and the accusation of being an enthusiast. Granting that something was said that was in opposition to Carey, which seems quite likely given the data, modern

⁶¹ John Dyer, cited in John Webster Morris, ‘Rev. J.W. Morris on an Incident in the Early History of Dr. Carey, in Reply to the Rev. John Dyer’, *The Congregational Magazine* 18 (March 1835), p. 162.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Morris sees the differences between his and Carey’s own remembrance of the event not as indicative of dulled or mistaken memories but as indicating that their memories are both correct, with each one filling in gaps in the other. However, both Morris and Carey claim to perfectly recall the event (*Ibid.*, pp. 162-163), meaning that, since Carey’s remembrance of the event diverges at points with that of Morris, one or both of them is mistaken at some point in the process.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

interpreters should, at the very least, consider whether or not the event carried the historical import attached to it.

Second, in a later edition of his memoir of Fuller, Morris adds to his first account and reveals that he himself was the friend of Carey's who first answered Ryland Sr's query for a topic of discussion. He says that his suggestion of a discussion about II Peter 2:1 was immediately rejected as 'Arminian'.⁶⁸ This reveals two things about Ryland Sr and this incident: first, he was not averse to treating others dismissively; and, second, he was not above using language that was either untrue or abusive.⁶⁹ These two traits were both on display in another incident in the life of Ryland Sr. William Newman describes Ryland Sr as being 'extremely offended by bad singing in public worship', and he once told a congregation that 'he wondered some of the angels did not come down and wring their necks off!'⁷⁰

Thirdly, Morris himself offers another interpretation of the event in the later edition of his Fuller biography: it was a farce.⁷¹ Responding to Ryland Jr's contention that the event never happened, he writes that 'possibly the conversation at Northampton in 1786 might be construed into a piece of pleasantry, and that the whole was intended [by Ryland Sr] as ironical'.⁷² He also refers to J.C. Ryland's remarks as 'sarcastic'.⁷³ This possibility has been overlooked by most interpreters of the event, but it is worth considering, especially in light of the character of Ryland Sr. In addition to what was said of him in the story related above, William Newman portrays Ryland Sr as a man who was well-respected for his immense mental talents and energies but

⁶⁸ Morris, *Andrew Fuller*, New Edition, p. 101. Presumably, Morris suggested that the ministers discuss the meaning of 'denying the Lord that bought them' in relationship to the doctrines of election and perseverance, as Ryland Sr's purported response was to tell Morris to 'go home, and read Gill and Brine, and various other commentators, and not to come there with his Arminian questions' (Ibid., p. 101).

⁶⁹ Morris was not an Arminian. Indeed, in the context of a Particular Baptist meeting of pastors, such a name would be considered an insult. This reveals two things, which may simply cancel one another out. First, Morris was an observer of this event. His account, then, is a first-hand account. Second, Morris is not a disinterested third party, as he implicitly styled himself in the first edition of his biography of Fuller (by omission). Rather, he was involved and was even on the receiving end of an insult from the man he has arguably made the villain of the story.

⁷⁰ Newman, *Rylandiana*, p. 9. Bear in mind that Newman's biography was not critical of Ryland Sr. Indeed, it was, in many ways, a work of hagiography, as Newman himself opens his work by saying, 'I had the privilege of being a member of his family, and was honoured with his friendship, nearly seven years, before I quitted the spot which is now endeared to me by a thousand tender recollections' (Ibid., vi). E. Carey also writes of Ryland Sr as a man who was 'accustomed to utter [himself] in extreme terms'. E. Carey, *Memoir*, 54. John Taylor, in an otherwise positive account of Ryland Sr, makes reference to a roll of scholars which Ryland Sr kept, in which he referred to his students variously as 'drunk', 'drunk and beastly', and 'Mad, double mad, devilish', among other names. John Taylor, *History of College Street Church, Northampton* (Northampton: Taylor and Son, 1897), p. 36.

⁷¹ This potential olive branch was offered just this once, as his 1835 article indicates an unwillingness to bend from his original assertions.

⁷² Morris, *Memoirs*, New Edition, p. 102. His reference to a 1786 date is indicative of Morris' own uncertainty regarding the event. Haykin's work conclusively shows a 1785 date.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 101.

who also was seen as somewhat odd.⁷⁴ It is quite possible, in light of Ryland Sr's eccentricity and history of similar outbursts, as well as the weaknesses of the high Calvinist and eschatological interpretations, that this episode is another example of Ryland Sr's idiosyncratic way of dealing with people.

This may help explain Ryland Jr's 'interpretation' of the event as well. Ryland Jr was known to have sought to shield his father from personal criticism. For example, when the son was revising his diary for his family and came to a point of his father's life that was less than exemplary (e.g., his remarriage and his consequent financial difficulties), the son wrote that 'many unpleasant consequences followed which are best omitted'.⁷⁵ Like many sons, Ryland Jr was eager to preserve his father's good name, and he took it upon himself to make sure that his father was not exposed to ridicule or shame even in his diary, which was meant only for his family.⁷⁶ It would fit the evidence available to say that, in his denial of Morris' account as an 'ill-natured anecdote', Ryland Jr once again sought to defend his father's name, this time in a situation in which Ryland Sr could be seen as being unfair or even abusively belligerent to a celebrated missionary.

None of this is meant to suggest that Carey encountered no opposition. Surely, he did. Both Ryland Jr and Fuller record that Carey was opposed for years after the meeting of ministers. Ryland Jr writes in his diary, dated 8 July, 1788, of a time when he asked Carey to preach for him at College Lane: 'Some of our people, who are wise above what is written, would not hear him, called him an Arminian, and discovered a strange spirit.' He goes on to say that he is 'almost worn out with grief at these foolish cavils against some of the best of my brethren', suggesting that such accusations were not uncommon for Carey. Fuller once commenced a memoir of Carey, which was left unfinished. In it, he says that Carey's ideas were the topic of conversation at several ministers' meetings between 1787 and 1790 and that 'some of our most aged and respectable ministers thought [...] that is was a wild and impracticable scheme that he had got in his mind, and therefore gave him no encouragement'.⁷⁷ This indicates that there was considerable opposition to Carey, but it is instructive to note that the opposition was not centred on Ryland Sr (he receives no mention from either), was varied in its substance (it ranged from charges of Arminianism to simple impracticality), and it came several years later than the 1785 meeting of ministers that became so famous.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ 'Eccentric' is used quite often of the man. See, for example, the descriptions of Ryland Sr by Newman, Robert Hall Jr, and Olinthus Gregory in Newman, *Rylandiana*, pp. 24, 192, 194-196, 199, and 201.

⁷⁵ Ryland, "Autograph Reminiscences", p. 11.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁷ Andrew Fuller, quoted in E. Carey, *William Carey*, p. 69.

⁷⁸ While such a hypothesis would go beyond the evidence, it would not be the first time that later writers have imputed to one well-known person the traits (here, the opposition) of many anonymous people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this particular event need not be read as a showdown between the mission-minded Carey and the stodgy, anti-missions Ryland, nor must it be seen as a stunted eschatological debate. Rather, it is the contention of this article that this episode of missionary history may consistently be read as an event in which a senior minister known for his eccentricities showed them in teasing two junior ministers at an associational meeting. It is memorable, not because it defined a new epoch, but because even an ‘ironical’ rebuke from a respected elder stings the one who receives it.

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When the Breaker Calls: Factors that Influenced the Revival of August 1881 in Weerdingemond¹

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Introduction

In the Old Testament book of Micah 2.12-13, we read about a ‘Breaker’² who opens a breach for the gathered remnant of Israel. Using the term ‘Breaker’, the prophet seems to be referring to God or a future Messiah King.³ However, what He is breaking and where He guides the people to, remains unclear in this passage. But it is written within a context of sin, oppression, and disbelief among the landowners, prophets, and leaders of Israel. And God proclaims to them His judgment.⁴

The same expression ‘the Breaker’ is used in a tract that describes the revival of August 1881 in the Baptist congregation of Weerdingemond.⁵ The writer of this tract is Berend Roeles, an evangelist who was in the service of this congregation.⁶ It is unclear if Roeles had Micah 2.13 in his mind, when he used the expression ‘Breaker’, but there is a striking similarity between them in their use of this term. Just like the Old Testament prophet, Roeles speaks about sin and disbelief and he emphasises that ‘the Breaker’

¹ This article is an edited version of a lecture delivered at the ‘Religious Revivals and their Effects: Perceptions, Media and Networks in the Modern World’ conference, organised by the Amsterdam Centre for Religious History (ACRH) at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, on 1 June 2018. I want to thank Henk Bakker, Teun van der Leer, Jos Jumelet, Chris Dykstra, and Pieter van Wingerden for their comments on this article.

² See King James Version, Amplified Bible, and New American Standard Bible. The English Standard Version translates it as: ‘He who opens the breach’. Other translations, like the Contemporary English Version, already paraphrase that God is the one to whom the text refers.

³ G. van den Brink, M.J. Paul, and J.C. Bette (eds.), *Studiebijbel Online. Commentaar Micha 2:1-13* (Doorn: Centrum voor Bijbelonderzoek, 2018). See also J. Ridderbos, *Korte verklaring der Heilige Schrift. De kleine profeten Obadja tot Zefanja* (Kok: Kampen, 1963), pp. 71-72 and W. Grudem (ed.), *Study Bible. English Standard Version* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2008), p. 1699. For an alternative explanation, see E. Eynikel (ed.) and others, *Internationaal Commentaar op de Bijbel. Band 2* (Kampen: Kok, 2001), pp. 1339-1340, who state that verses 12-13 are the words of false prophets with whom Micah is arguing.

⁴ See chapters 2 and 3 for the literary context of this passage: Micah 2.1-11 focuses on the abusing landowners, and God’s judgment on them (2.3-5); in 3.1-4 God speaks to the oppressing leaders and in 3.5-8 to the misleading prophets; 3:9-12 summarises the passage with God’s judgment on Jerusalem. In the centre of the passage (2.12-13), however, there is a message of salvation for the people of Israel.

⁵ B. Roeles, *Het genadewerk Gods in de bekeering van zondaren in Weerdingemond* (Sneek: Wiarda, year unknown), p. 10. Weerdingemond is now called Nieuw-Weerdinge, which lies in the north-eastern part of The Netherlands, in the province of Drenthe, near the border with Germany and the province Groningen. Officially it then was part of Groningen, but factually it was in Drenthe.

⁶ Because it is a tract, Roeles in the first place is trying to convince his readers to open their hearts and minds for his revival message. So it is not a descriptive document in pure form, but it does give us important information about the events that happened.

needed to break down this resistance. However, there is also an important difference between their uses of the term ‘the Breaker’. Instead of referring to God or a future Messiah-King, Roeles uses it as a reference to the Holy Spirit.⁷ This need not be very surprising, because it matches the strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit within the holiness and revival movement of the nineteenth century, which strongly influenced Roeles. According to the evangelist, the Spirit was in control during the revival in Weerdingemond and He broke down the sinful resistance of the people that were involved.⁸

In this article, I will focus on the circumstances in which this revival started and try to delineate which of these circumstances might have had an important influence. In juridical terms, we could speak of ‘circumstantial evidence’, or: ‘Where there is smoke, there is fire.’ This leads to my research question, namely: *‘Which factors in the second half of the nineteenth century influenced the arising of the revival of August 1881 in Weerdingemond?’* In order to find an answer to this question, first I will describe what happened during the revival of August 1881 in Weerdingemond. Then I will delineate the socio-political context and focus on the ecclesiastical and theological context. Finally, I will give a tentative conclusion of my findings.

The Revival of August 1881 in Weerdingemond

Around 1850, most peat areas in The Netherlands were excavated, except for the south-eastern part of Drenthe. So the surroundings of Weerdingemond were a sparsely populated area. During the last decades of the century, however, Weerdingemond would become the largest peat supplier of The Netherlands. This started with the unlocking of the area by digging an access to a nearby canal, from 1872 onward. This would lead to a rapid growth of the population, in particular after 1880.⁹

Of course, church people also moved to Weerdingemond. One of them was Philippus Lindeman, who was a peat boss – a manager and employee of the peat work – and member of the Baptist congregation in Stadskanaal. Lindeman became the elder of the Baptists in the area and he also committed himself to evangelisation. Because the group of believers was growing, a small church was built in 1875, which became independent from its ‘mother congregation’ in Stadskanaal later that year, and Lindeman

⁷ It is, however, not completely ruled out that Micah is referring to the Holy Spirit. Other Old Testament prophets – during the same period and later – speak about the coming of the Spirit; see for instance: Isaiah 32.15; Ezekiel 36.26-27; Joel 2.28-29 [3.1-2] and Zechariah 12.10. Micah 3.8 also mentions the Spirit, but does not specifically refer to His coming on all flesh.

⁸ See, for instance, Roeles, pp. 4-10, 19.

⁹ Author unknown, ‘Grepen uit het verleden van de Drentse veenkolonie Nieuw-Weerdinge’, *Historisch Nieuw-Weerdinge* <<http://www.historisch-nieuw-weerdinge.nl/ontstaan.htm>> [accessed 03 August 2018].

became its pastor.¹⁰ This Baptist congregation was the first church in Weerdingermond; in 1879 a Christian Reformed Church followed.¹¹ The fact that the population of Weerdingermond grew so rapidly during that period, in combination with the fact that the Baptist congregation was the first church there, might already be a first pointer to a factor that influenced the revival, as we will see below.

In November 1879 the flourishing Baptist congregation appointed the evangelist Berend Roeles. But there was misfortune too. In May 1880 a peat fire burnt down the church building. The members, however, were not discouraged and rebuilt their church.¹² Then the Baptist pastor from Sneek – Johannes Horn – was invited to come and preach in Weerdingermond for a couple of days. In May 1881 Horn had organised some revival meetings in the area of Sneek and Heeg (Friesland),¹³ and on 28th July he wrote that he would come to Weerdingermond on 14th August. So Roeles hoped that August 1881 would be a month of spiritual harvest, and Horn encouraged him and his wife to pray daily for his coming.¹⁴

In Roeles' tract, mentioned earlier, he describes what happened during the following two weeks. Horn and Roeles would organise several meetings in Weerdingermond and the nearby Valthermond. When Horn preached, he started to read a biblical text. But instead of explaining the text, he simply urged his listeners to surrender to Jesus.¹⁵ Then, after the Monday evening meeting during the first week, Roeles describes what happened:

The church was full, the after-meeting was heart-breaking. In, in front of, and behind the church, our whole house, in the front and back room, in the shed, behind the house, everywhere there were defeated people, calling to God because of the multitude of their sins. The "Breaker" had gone before us and there was nothing else to do but to take hold of the souls, to free them from their swaddling clothes and to let them go in freedom.¹⁶

¹⁰ J. van Dam, *Geschiedenis van het Baptisme in Nederland* (Arnhem: Unie van Baptisten Gemeenten, 1970), pp. 50-51; G.A. Wumkes, *De opkomst en vestiging van het Baptisme in Nederland* (Sneek: A.J. Osinga, 1912), pp. 219-221; Ph. Lindeman, 'Ongestudeerde predikanten', *De Zondagsbode in doopsgezinde en verwante christelijke gemeenten*, 1.22 (1887-1888).

¹¹ F. Verkade, 'Nieuw Weerdinge Gereformeerde Kerk', *Verkades Dominees Memories* <<http://dominees.nl/search.php?srt=g&id=12320>> [accessed 03 August 2018]. See also H. op 't Holt, 't Noorden's eerste bede om hulp', *De bazuin; gereformeerde stemmen uit de Christelijke Afgescheidene Kerk in Nederland-kerk- nieuws- en advertentieblad*, 29.50 (1881). It lasted until 1911, before the first Dutch Reformed Church was established in Weerdingermond: F. Verkade, 'Nieuw Weerdinge Hervormde Gemeente', *Verkades Dominees Memories* <<http://dominees.nl/search.php?srt=g&id=12321>> [accessed 03 August 2018].

¹² Wumkes, pp. 221-222. See also J.W. Brat, 'De veenbrand te Ter Apel bij de Weerdingermond', *Het nieuws van de dag: kleine courant* (3 June 1880), p. 2.

¹³ Wumkes, p. 222. See also Author unknown, 'Heerlijke tijdingen uit Sneek en Heeg', *Het eeuwige leven. Tijdschrift gewijd aan de bevordering van de heiligmaking volgens de Schrift en aan de opwekking dezer dagen* (1881-1882), pp. 21-23.

¹⁴ Roeles, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 4-7.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 10; my translation (AS).

He continues by saying: 'In general the daily labour here stood still, the Holy Spirit seized all souls.'¹⁷ The evangelist writes that in two weeks, over a hundred people were converted.¹⁸

The following Thursday, Horn started to focus on the alcohol abuse of the congregation, by saying that 'the same lips with which you touch the Lord's supper cup, some of you polluted with the drinking cup of the devil'.¹⁹ So, when their pastor Lindeman solemnly pledged his abstinence from alcohol, the congregation members followed him. Even the peat shippers in the area were surprised about the quietness among the people of Weerdingemond, who were known as restless people.²⁰ The next Sunday, there was a baptismal service in which fifty-four people were baptised.²¹

However, soon the triumphal mood would turn into disappointment. On 12 March 1882, Lindeman organised a congregational meeting, because he had second thoughts about his decision to swear to abstain from alcohol and wanted to state a more moderate position. With an appeal to I Corinthians 8 he asked the congregation if they could tolerate their alcohol drinking brothers and sisters. Many of them declared that they could, and a few that they could not, including Roeles. Without any further explanation, Lindeman then stated that they were cut off from the congregation. Roeles protested and was even willing to withdraw his words, but Lindeman was unrelenting. So, over seventy people were forced to leave the congregation, and a few months later Roeles started a new ministry in Deventer. Later Roeles and Lindeman were reconciled, but the damage in the congregation was already done.²²

It is unclear what the reason for Lindeman's sudden turn was and why he was so anxious to cut off the other members from the congregation. A possible explanation is that Lindeman, as a peat boss, also owned a shop and that he was afraid that he would lose a part of his income.²³ It is also possible that he almost felt compelled to swear to abstain from alcohol, because of the forceful character of Horn's speech and that later he started to have doubts about his decision. A third possibility is that Lindeman and Roeles struggled with regard to the question of who was in charge in the congregation.

I already noted that the rapid growth and the fact that the Baptist congregation was the first church in Weerdingemond, might be a factor that

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 10; my translation (AS).

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 13; my translation (AS).

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 17-19. A week later, again six people were baptised, see p. 21.

²² Wumkes, pp. 227-229, 232.

²³ In the next paragraph I will write more about the forced shopping in the peat areas.

influenced the revival. When we focus on the revival itself, some other possible factors come to mind. Horn's emphasis on prayer and the strong focus on the work of the Holy Spirit, for example, might be a pointer that the Spirit was in fact working through the revival meetings. On the other hand, the forceful character of Horn's speeches and his emphasis on instantaneous decisions may have been a reason why people felt almost compelled to respond to his calls.

In the following section I will focus on the socio-political context, paying special attention to the conditions in which the peat workers lived and worked. This sheds some new light on possible factors of influence.

The Socio-Political Context

In 1848 King William II (who reigned from 1840-1849) accepted a new constitution, which gave sovereignty to the parliament, and which strongly reduced his power as king. This led to economic liberalisation, and also resulted in the long-awaited separation of church and state.²⁴ This meant that the Dutch Reformed Church²⁵ lost its privileged position. Other churches like the Roman Catholic Church and small dissenter groups, such as the Christian Seceded Congregations²⁶ and the Baptists,²⁷ finally enjoyed freedom of religion. But the Dutch Reformed Church had a hard time getting used to the new situation. Their officials still consulted the government in making important decisions²⁸ and their members protested strongly against the recovery of Catholic hierarchy.²⁹

²⁴ In fact this was already the case in the constitution of 1798, during the Batavian Republic. But during the period from 1801-1813, when The Netherlands were under the (direct) influence of Napoleon and especially during the reign of William I (who reigned from 1813-1839), church and state were tied together more closely.

²⁵ In Dutch: *Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*.

²⁶ In Dutch: *Christelijk Afscheiden Gemeenten*. These were the congregations that separated themselves from the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834 under the guidance of Hendrik de Cock. We call this separation the *Afscheiding* ('Secession'), the first big schism in the Dutch protestant church since the Remonstrants were forced to leave the church in 1619. Later the *Afscheiden* churches were called 'Christian Reformed Churches' (Dutch: *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken*). In 1892 most of these churches were merged together with the churches who separated themselves from the Dutch Reformed Church with the *Doleantie* ('grievance/complaint') of 1886 under the guidance of Abraham Kuyper. Since 1892 these churches were called 'Reformed Churches in The Netherlands' (Dutch: *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*).

²⁷ The Baptists called their churches: 'Congregation of Baptized Christians' (Dutch: *Gemeente van Gedoopte Christenen*).

²⁸ For example, they asked the king to confirm their new General Regulations of 1852, even though it was unnecessary according to the constitution. A.J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795. Geschiedenis, theologische ontwikkelingen en de verhouding tot haar zusterkerken in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Kampen: Kok, 1974), p. 156.

²⁹ In a short period of time, this so-called 'April-movement', in 1853 collected 200,000 signatures – there were 80,000 voters at that time – and they handed it over to King William III (who reigned from 1849-1890), instead of the parliament. Because the king received the signatures behind the back of the government, the prime minister Thorbecke offered the dismissal of his cabinet. To calm down the heated minds, his successor Van Hall would organise a certain supervision of the Catholic churches, but he did not

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of far-reaching socio-economic transformations in The Netherlands, because industrialisation began to develop.³⁰ For a lot of people this meant a significant improvement in living conditions, but the working class were not able to benefit as much as other groups did. They had to work under tough conditions and had long working hours. These circumstances led to multiple problems like health issues, alcohol abuse, and developmental problems.³¹ Also children had to work in factories, although in 1874 a law on child labour tried to stop their work in the industrial sector. But it was hard to enforce this law and it did not apply to work in the fields, such as peat work.³²

I noted earlier that the excavation of the south-eastern part of Drenthe started in the same period. For a long time, Drenthe was an outsider among the Dutch provinces. People from Drenthe were merely seen as second-class citizens.³³ This was especially the case for the workers in the peat areas of Drenthe – mostly people from Friesland, Groningen and Germany – whereas the gentlemen farmers from the sandy soils were more respected. The image of people from Drenthe was that they were delayed in their development, that they lived among sheep and dolmens, and that their life was determined by peat, gin, and suspicion.³⁴ It is hotly debated how poor the peat workers in Drenthe actually were, but there is little doubt that they worked and lived under tough conditions.³⁵

In accordance with the national economic growth, the peat industry flourished from 1850 until the end of the seventies. However, because of the growing competition with other sources of fuel supply – such as coal – and because of a crisis in the agricultural sector in 1880, wages started to drop and workers began to lose their employment.³⁶ Besides this there was the rule of forced shopping, which meant that a peat boss was owner of the store where the workers bought their own groceries. In most cases this was a large disadvantage for the workers, because prices were higher. And in the winter – when there was less employment – they had to buy groceries in advance,

change their freedom of religion. See H. Selderhuis (ed.), *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis* (Kampen: Kok, 2006), pp. 647-650.

³⁰ Industrialisation in The Netherlands started relatively late, compared to England, Germany, and Belgium. Also, the Dutch industry had a stronger focus on light and processing industries. J. Kennedy, *Een beknopte geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017), pp. 279-281.

³¹ The peat workers had to cope with comparable problems. S. Siewert, *Representatie van de Drentse veenarbeiders. Een onderzoek naar het ontstaan van de representatie van veenarbeiders in Drenthe aan het einde van de negentiende eeuw* (Universiteit Utrecht: Unpublished master's thesis, 2009), pp. 32-48.

³² Siewert, p. 10; Kennedy, pp. 279-281, 287-290; Rasker, pp. 201-212.

³³ In the seventeenth century, Drenthe was the only province that was not represented in the Dutch parliament, because it was considered as being too insignificant. See Kennedy, pp. 148-149.

³⁴ Siewert, pp. 11-12.

³⁵ R. Paping, (ed.), *De extreme armoede van arbeiders in de Drentse venen in de negentiende en eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw. Mythe of harde werkelijkheid* (Groningen: Boon, 2000) focuses on this debate and brings together several contributions of writers from both sides of the debate.

³⁶ Paping, pp. 65-66, 87-100, 103-110, 131-134, 207-209; Siewert, p. 50.

so they were in debt to their employer. This created relationships of dependency, which sometimes had far-reaching consequences, such as manipulation and poverty.³⁷

The peat season lasted from April until autumn. During this season the workers had to work from sunrise until 4 or 5 pm.³⁸ In the autumn, most of them worked as guest workers in Germany or in other parts of The Netherlands.³⁹ In the winter it was much harder to find a job, so in the working season they had to earn enough money for the rest of the year.⁴⁰ The peat digging was tough work and was generally done by the men and older boys. The drying of peats was done by women and children, and men loaded the ships.⁴¹ Because of the tough and monotonous work, and also because shippers and peat bosses sometimes paid the workers by giving them liquor, alcohol abuse was a common problem among peat workers. This could lead to multiple problems, but for those who stayed clear from alcohol abuse, life was more bearable.⁴²

This description of the lives of the peat workers might point to a factor that influenced the revival, namely that the tough circumstances of the peat workers might have encouraged them to strive for emancipation. The revival meetings may have been a way to foster this purpose. Also, the religious freedom gave the Baptists the possibility to organise their own meetings, as we have seen earlier in this article. To get a deeper sense of the development of the Dutch Baptist movement in the nineteenth century and its most important influences, I will delineate the ecclesiastical and theological context in the next section, which will also provide more information about the influencing factors of the revival.

The Ecclesiastical and Theological Context

In the nineteenth century theological academies and churches in The Netherlands were influenced by Enlightenment ideas. During the first half of the century, this took a moderate form, but in the second half it radicalised under the influence of modern theology, in particular German theology, such as Tübingen thinkers like D.F. Strauss and F.C. Baur. They used new methods, for example the empirical approach, evolutionism, and historical-critical research. They questioned the historical reliability of the Bible and

³⁷ Paping, pp. 97-98, 108, 125, 147; Siewert, pp. 17, 29-30, 51-52.

³⁸ Paping, p. 106.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 90-91.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 87-89, 107, 121-123; Siewert, pp. 19, 32-38. So people with large families had the advantage of getting a job in this industry and it was essential that the workers stayed physically healthy in order to keep their jobs.

⁴² Paping, pp. 74-75, 125-126; Siewert, pp. 18, 21-22, 38-41, 52.

rejected the historical truth of Jesus' resurrection. For some pastors these insights led to the resignation of their ministry, but other pastors and professors wanted to use their new insights to modernise the church. Modern theology in particular influenced academics and people from the higher classes.⁴³

This new theological direction led to a strong counter-response from the orthodox side of the church. In 1834 there already was a schism, which tore off a large group of orthodox inclined local churches across the country – especially in the northern provinces – from the Dutch Reformed Church. They wanted to reclaim the prominent position of the church confessions. In their slipstream Baptists and other groups followed, and in 1886 a large schism broke out again in the Dutch Reformed Church.⁴⁴ But also those who remained in the Dutch Reformed Church increasingly started to oppose modern theology and its forerunners. This was mainly due to the Dutch Réveil movement, which was a late continental offshoot of the First Great Awakening.⁴⁵

An interesting person connected to the Réveil circle was the former Mennonite pastor, Jan de Liefde.⁴⁶ Moreover, he would have an important influence on the Baptists in the second half of the nineteenth century, although he had an ambiguous relationship with them, because of their strict view on baptism and church membership. His influence was especially seen through several students of his evangelism school *Bethanië*, and in particular

⁴³ Rasker, pp. 113-124; Selderhuis, pp. 656-662.

⁴⁴ See note 26 for more information about these schisms and the relationship between the churches of the *Afscheiding* of 1834 and the *Doleantie* of 1886 and their merging in 1892. The first Baptist church in The Netherlands was founded in 1845 by Johannes Elias Feisser. For the background story of his turn from the Dutch Reformed Church (and a liberal view) to the Baptists (and an orthodox view), see A. Stellingwerf, *Johannes Elias Feisser. Nederlandse baptistenpionier in Gasselternijveen* (Theologische Universiteit Kampen: Unpublished Bachelor thesis, 2016).

⁴⁵ This was led by the Wesleys and George Whitefield in England and by Jonathan Edwards in America. See R.F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life. An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1979), pp. 35-46. From England it moved to the European continent and especially from Switzerland it moved to The Netherlands in the first half of the nineteenth century. From 1845-1854 followers of the Dutch Réveil united under the name 'Christian Friends'. Among other topics, they spoke about how to relate to the developments within the church. But they had different approaches, varying from a strict juridical approach – with a strong emphasis on the church confessions – to a more moderate ethical approach, with an emphasis on the conscience. At their twentieth meeting in 1854, the different directions among Christian Friends would lead to a conflict, which meant the end of their close co-operation. See M.E. Kluit, *Het protestantse Réveil in Nederland en daarbuiten. 1815-1865* (Amsterdam: Paris, 1970), pp. 445-497.

⁴⁶ It was especially Jan de Liefde – who stood outside the Dutch Reformed Church – who clashed with the ethical-orientated pastor Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye at the last meeting of Christian Friends, because he thought it was too much orientated towards the Dutch Reformed Church. After his break with the Christian Friends, Jan de Liefde more strongly moved into a Free Church and congregational direction. In 1856 he was the founder of a 'Free Evangelical Congregation' (Dutch: *Vrij Evangelische Gemeente*), which was united with other Free Evangelical Congregations in 1881. Because of his ambivalent relationship with the topic of baptism, they baptised both infants and adults (on confession of their faith). See Kluit, pp. 476-480, 494-497; Wumkes, pp. 97-102.

in two fields of ecclesial interest: more awareness of the missionary task of the church (inner mission), and the turn from the doctrine of particular election to the doctrine of general election. Some of De Liefde's students were sent out as evangelists to the peat colonies and were connected with the Baptist congregation in Gasselternijveen.⁴⁷ The fact that several evangelists worked in the peat areas may have made it easier for peat workers to visit the revival meetings and influenced their attitude towards the gospel.

One of the students of De Liefde was Kors Holleman, who also evangelised in the peat areas and then settled in Leeuwarden.⁴⁸ Just like his predecessor, he started a school for evangelists, and called it *Klein-Bethanië* (small *Bethanië*). This school brought forward several future Baptist pastors and evangelists. One of them was Johannes Horn, who was baptised by Holleman in 1869. He started to evangelise in Sneek and founded a Baptist congregation there in 1880.⁴⁹ Horn came in contact with Berend Roeles and baptised him in 1879.⁵⁰ These men would soon become leading figures among the Dutch Baptists.⁵¹ They became key figures who, for example, were involved in the foundation of the Dutch Baptist Union in January 1881.⁵² In visiting congregations, they preached at regular meetings, which in some cases led to new revivals.⁵³

Especially in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the Dutch Baptist movement was influenced by the Anglo-Saxon holiness and revival movement. In 1875 there was a conference in Brighton with speakers including Dwight L. Moody and Pearsall Smith. Here several Dutch church leaders were present, such as Abraham Kuyper and Philippus J. Hoedemaker. Although at first some were optimistic, most orthodox leaders

⁴⁷ Wumkes, pp. 102-141; O.H. de Vries, *Gelovig gedoopt. 400 jaar baptisme, 150 jaar in Nederland* (Kampen: Kok, 2009), pp. 119-120. The congregation of Gasselternijveen – the first Dutch Baptist congregation – was later continued in Stadskanaal. An example of one of the students of De Liefde is Eduard Gerdens, a German who studied Dutch literature and who evangelised among the German peat workers in Drenthe. He became the pastor of Gasselternijveen from 1858-1859 and baptised Philippus Lindeman in 1858. But, because he had a different opinion about an 'open' or 'closed' celebration of the Lord's Supper (the Baptists had the stricter view), Gerdens and the Baptists in Gasselternijveen went their separate ways.

⁴⁸ Before he went to the peat areas, he also evangelised in the surroundings of Haarlem.

⁴⁹ Wumkes, pp. 124-125, 194-216. Horn already started working in Sneek in 1869. Wumkes, pp. 204-206.

⁵⁰ Wumkes, pp. 221-222. Roeles came to faith under the guidance of D. de Gilde, another student from *Klein-Bethanië*, who trained Roeles as an evangelist.

⁵¹ Another leading figure worth mentioning was Hendrikadius Z. Kloekers, who urged several starting congregations to build up their community with the Baptist principles of baptism and a closed membership (only baptised people could become members and only members could join the Lord's Supper). For more about Kloekers, see Wumkes, pp. 131-141, 165-179, 200-269.

⁵² Wumkes, pp. 243-247. Although Roeles was absent at the actual moment of foundation, he was present in the pre-stage of development and he was a member from the beginning.

⁵³ Wumkes, pp. 232-242; J. de Hart, 'Heerlijke Opwekking te Hengelo (Overijssel)', *Het eeuwige leven. Tijdschrift gewijd aan de bevordering van de heiligmaking volgens de Schrift en aan de opwekking dezer dagen* (1881-1882), pp. 133-135.

responded negatively to the occurrences in Brighton,⁵⁴ while others, for example the Dutch Reformed pastor Pierre Huet,⁵⁵ tried to start a revival movement in The Netherlands. Together with like-minded people he organised conferences and started a magazine in order to exchange experiences and write about topics related to revivalism and sanctification. Also involved were Horn and the Baptist pastor J. De Hart.⁵⁶ The major contribution of the holiness and revival movement to the Dutch Baptist movement, was that the Baptists started to emphasise themes such as the work of the Holy Spirit, the idea of resistance and subjection, alcohol abstinence, general election, instantaneous decisions of faith, the use of after-meetings, and revivalism.⁵⁷

The fact that the Dutch Baptists were open to the holiness and revival theology points to some new factors which might have influenced the revival. First, a reason for this openness might have been that it was an attractive third option besides the modernist option and the orthodox option. Next to an emphasis on general election, the holiness and revivalist theology also gave them a stronger focus on sanctification and personal emotions. But – as we already have seen in the section about the revival in Weerdingemond – in these revivalist meetings there was also a strong focus on instantaneous decisions, with an emphasis on emotions on the spot. This may have pushed people in certain directions. There is, however, also a strong emphasis on the work and person of the Holy Spirit within this movement, as we have seen earlier in the emphasis on prayer.

Conclusion

The main focus of this article was to search for factors in the second half of the nineteenth century, which possibly influenced the arising of the revival of August 1881 in Weerdingemond. Now that I have presented some

⁵⁴ Wumkes, pp. 217-218; H. Algra, *Het wonder van de negentiende eeuw. Over vrije kerken en kleine luyden* (Franeker: Wever, 1979), pp. 281-289. Kuyper was positive at first, he even used the Brighton conference as a positive example in a speech in the Dutch parliament. But most orthodox leaders thought it did not match with the Calvinistic election doctrine and found it too extravagant.

⁵⁵ This Huet wrote the word of recommendation for Roeles' tract on the revival in Weerdingemond: Roeles, front. For more about Huet, see F.L. van 't Hooft, 'Huet, Dammes Pierre Marie', in *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme. Deel 2*, ed. by D. Nauta and others (Kampen: Kok, 1983), pp. 263-265.

⁵⁶ Wumkes, pp. 217-219. But in 1882 there was an argument between Huet and the Baptists about the importance of (believer's) baptism, so each went their separate ways. Wumkes, p. 219. See also P. Huet, 'Baptisme en sabbatisme', *Het eeuwige leven. Tijdschrift gewijd aan de bevordering van de heiligmaking volgens de Schrift en aan de opwekking dezer dagen* (1881-1882), pp. 185-190; Author unknown, 'Overtuigingen!', *De Christen, Maandblad, uitgegeven door de Unie van Gedoode Christenen in Nederland*, 1.6 (1882), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷ De Vries, pp. 133-151.

decisive information, I will list the most important factors – in random order – below:

- I have noted that the population of Weerdingermond grew rapidly from the seventies and eighties onward. This might have been a reason why so many people visited the meetings of the Baptist congregation. Besides this, there were probably people among them who were already church-related. For several that might have been the reason to visit the Baptist congregation, because it was the first church in Weerdingermond. Also, the fact that they were in a new environment, might have encouraged them to visit a church from another denomination (which was possible because of the religious freedom).⁵⁸
- I have described the life of the peat workers. They had to work under tough conditions and were committed to heavy and monotonous work. On top of this there were poverty and alcohol abuse. Revivalist theology may have offered them an opportunity to strive for emancipation and a purpose to live for. The emphasis on alcohol abstention, for example, could help them free themselves from their alcohol addiction.⁵⁹
- I have mentioned that there were several evangelists who worked with the peat workers, of whom Roeles is one example.⁶⁰ The fact that the workers already knew the evangelists and their message, may have made it easier to join the meetings and have an open attitude towards the gospel.⁶¹ In addition: there were other revivals in the area going on that may have been interrelated.⁶²
- I have shown that Baptists were open to holiness and revival theology. One of the reasons for this openness may have been that it was the attractive third option for the (lower educated) working class,⁶³ besides the elitist option (modernist) and the rigid option (orthodox). Under the influence of Jan de Liefde and his students, most Baptists turned from the Calvinist particular election doctrine to the evangelical doctrine of general election, which was also an emphasis within the holiness and revivalist theology. In addition, this

⁵⁸ See also Siewert, p. 16 about the absence of the Dutch Reformed Church in most peat areas.

⁵⁹ The ‘emancipation’ argument is also sometimes used with regard to the *Afscheiding, Doleantie* and the upcoming of socialism during this period.

⁶⁰ See, for example, B. Roeles, ‘Eene roepstem’, *Het Oosten; wekelijksch orgaan der Weesinrichting te Neerbosch*, 575 (1882).

⁶¹ See also Siewert, pp. 16, 23 about the importance of evangelists and the high attendance at church services in peat areas.

⁶² For example in Groningen, ’t Zandt (North-eastern Groningen) and Hengelo. Wumkes, pp. 232-242; De Hart, pp. 133-135.

⁶³ Siewert, p. 26.

theological approach also made them more aware of the importance of sanctification and personal emotions.

- In close connection to the former point stands the observation that in Moodian revivalist meetings there was a strong focus on instantaneous decisions. This also became visible in the preaching-style of Horn. His invitation to repentance had an almost forceful character. There was a strong focus on emotions on the spot and decisions that had to be taken right away. This may have pushed people into certain directions.
- I have noted that the holiness and revival movement strongly focuses on the work and person of the Holy Spirit. This observation implies that believers strongly depend on the work of the Spirit, instead of depending on themselves, which is also closely connected to the theme of resistance and subjection. The emphasis becomes quite clear in the dominance of prayer, as Horn urged Roeles and his wife to pray daily for the meetings they were about to organise when he announced his coming to Weerdingermont.⁶⁴ It is, of course, possible that such a focus on the Holy Spirit may have actually resulted in a strong contribution of the Spirit during the revival.⁶⁵

As I noted above, these (in)direct factors are not hard evidence. They are pointers at the possible ‘smoke’ and ‘fire’ of the historic revival in Weerdingermont. However, if we had asked Berend Roeles what caused the revival, I think he would have been less cautious and clearly stated that it was the work of the Holy Spirit. Because: when the Breaker calls, resistance will turn into surrender.

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⁶⁴ For the importance of prayer, see also P. Huet, ‘Inleiding’, *Het eeuwige leven. Tijdschrift gewijd aan de bevordering van de heiligmaking volgens de Schrift en aan de opwekking dezer dagen* (1881-1882), pp. 1-5; De Hart, pp. 133-135.

⁶⁵ See also Richard Lovelace’s scheme of spiritual renewal: Lovelace, p. 75. He also strongly emphasises that believers should depend on (the work of) the triune God, with special attention to the mediating work of Christ and the Holy Spirit with regard to the justification, sanctification, indwelling of the Spirit, and authority in spiritual conflict (primary elements) and its outworking in church life (secondary elements).

Always Already Loved: Recovering the Doctrine of Justification from Eternity

Johannes Steenbuch

Introduction

Modern evangelicalism can to a large degree be said to subscribe to the idea that human beings are only justified before God in the moment they repent and exercise what is sometimes called ‘saving faith’. A well-known cliché is the one about ‘inviting Jesus into your heart’ or saying the sinner’s prayer. According to a study by LifeWay, a surprising majority of self-identifying American evangelicals believe that individuals must contribute to their own salvation by taking the first step in salvation.¹ This is not only relevant in an American context, but also in a European and global evangelicalism still fashioned by the heritage of Pietism.

It is not hard to see why a classical reformation slogan like *sola fide* has so often been misunderstood as a statement about the ability of faith to create its object. But if the gospel has simply become the ‘good news’ about the inherent creative potential of human beings’ own faith, it hardly offers any real alternative to the rampant subjectivism and relativism of our age. The claim that God’s unconditional love is nevertheless conditional on how we receive it, is not just baffling for many non-churched, but also comes uncannily close to being a downright denial of the efficacy of the cross. Hence, there may be good reasons for seeking an alternative understanding of the relationship between faith and justification.

This is where the doctrine of justification from eternity becomes useful. According to this doctrine, as developed by Baptists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries against the over-emphasis on repentance in Puritan and missional conceptions of faith, the subjective exercise of faith can never be a contributing cause of justification. Justification is a fact prior to repentance and faith. As such the doctrine of justification from eternity offers an alternative to the widespread modern and post-modern superstitions of human autonomy, as well as the sentimentalism and eroticism of popular neo-Calvinism, that only inadequately remedies the

¹ See ‘Evangelicals’ Favorite Heresies Revisited by Researchers’ in *Christianity Today* (September 28, 2016).

former.² The radical monergism implicit in the doctrine means that the human will is in no way instrumental in justification.

The debate about the time of justification is far from just being a matter of speculation. It is relevant for practical theology, as it raises questions for mission and evangelism: Is preaching imperative for saving people or is it rather the joyful revelation of something which is already true about our existence? The doctrine of justification from eternity suggests the latter. The gospel is not an obligation we are invited or urged to fulfill, a chance or an offer made to us, but an announcement and a promise (Barth).³ Thus the efforts of the church are released to be a celebration of the gospel rather than a busy and desperate attempt at saving as many souls as possible before Christ returns.

The doctrine of justification from eternity has, however, for good reasons, been criticised for leading to passivity in regard to evangelisation and mission: Why preach if people are justified before even hearing the gospel? But rather than modifying the radical monergism behind the doctrine, as was done historically, when missional theology took the lead in Baptist thinking, there are other possible approaches. If the notion of justification from eternity is to be recovered, without once more ending up in the pitfalls of a too anti-missionary scepticism about the church's efforts of preaching the gospel to the world, the doctrine must be freed from the particularistic soteriological framework in which it was often developed by earlier Baptists. Moreover, before doing this, I will suggest a revised understanding of the relationship between eternity and time, as a way to avoid the charges of making history a mere mirror of eternal truths.

The Roots of the Doctrine in English So-Called Anti-Nomianism⁴

The roots of the doctrine of justification from eternity, as it took shape in Baptist theology, can be discerned in the so-called anti-nomianism that had become widespread throughout England in the 1640s.⁵ The theology of

² The popularity of neo-Calvinism (e.g. John Piper) in parts of evangelicalism can perhaps be explained by a disappointment with liberal ideals of human autonomy. But as formulated in a framework where justification is still said to happen as a result of the exercise of faith by the human will (free or not), neo-Calvinism offers no real alternative.

³ Karl Barth, *Deliverance to the Captives* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010), p. 31.

⁴ As it was only later formulated as a 'doctrine', it must be excused if the following attempts at an 'archeology' of the idea of justification from eternity involve some degree of anachronism. It should also be considered that the idea that justification happens 'from eternity' was far from peculiar to Baptist thinkers, who frequently borrowed from reformed theologians of other denominations. Most of these will be omitted from what follows, in order to focus on the Baptist reception of the idea.

⁵ This tradition has also by contemporary scholarship been termed 'Hyper-Calvinism'. See Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765* (London: The Olive Tree, 1967);

reputed anti-nomians like John Saltmarsh, John Eaton and Tobias Crisp was developed partly in response to a perceived over-emphasis on the *ordo salutis* in Puritan theology. Here justification was seen as following consequently upon prior steps of calling, regeneration, faith, and repentance. For critics the Puritan emphasis on repentance made a new law out of faith. Thus, against this tradition, the so-called anti-nomians emphasised the freeness of grace independently of, and prior to, repentance and faith.⁶

Most important for later Baptists seems to have been the Anglican incumbent theologian and preacher Tobias Crisp (1600-1643) who developed what David Parnham has called a ‘covenantal quietism’ against the legitimacy of ‘a pietistic tradition that was overly elaborated and destructive of souls’.⁷ Following Hebrews 8, Crisp saw the promise of a new covenant in Jeremiah 31 as fulfilled with the ministry of Christ, rendering the function of the divine ‘law’ as a necessary means to conviction of sins obsolete. The conviction of sins, conversion, and faith are not conditions of justification, but at most the result thereof, making the role of the ‘law’ (the Mosaic law as well as the natural law) in the traditional protestant scheme of law and gospel of less importance.

Crisp held to a strict monergism, where justification and salvation is the work of God alone. It is not human obedience and holiness that justifies and saves: ‘I must tell you, all this sanctification of life is not a jot the way of that justified person to heaven’,⁸ Crisp famously asserted. The justification of the sinner takes place in the new covenant before the sinner is even aware of it. Faith is not a cause of justification, but the manifestation of it. Crisp is reported to have said that ‘The elect are justified from eternity, at Christ's death; and the latest time is before we are born.’⁹ It may seem that Crisp was not fully decided on when justification actually took place, though for him the main concern must have been that it happened ‘before we are born’, and as such prior to repentance and faith.

Crisp’s radical monergism became influential in independent church life. The idea that the elect are justified before having faith, and perhaps even ‘from eternity’, seems to have gained an early influence over English Baptists. Among these were Samuel Richardson (c. 1602-1658), who with

James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-century Study* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), pp. 89ff.

⁶ John Eaton, *Honey-Combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone* (1642), quoted heavily from Luther. Though scarcely quoted in Crisp’s sermons, Crisp also seems to have been inspired by Luther’s attacks on works righteousness. Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (London, 1643).

⁷ David Parnham, ‘The Covenantal Quietism of Tobias Crisp’, *Church History*, Vol. 75, Issue 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 511-543.

⁸ Tobias Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted* (London, 1643), sermon 4.

⁹ Quoted in Daniel Steele, *A Substitute for Holiness; or, Antinomianism Revived* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), p. 139.

eleven others signed the 1644 and the 1646 London Confessions of Faith.¹⁰ In his treatise *Justification by Christ Alone*, Richardson denied that faith is any means of ‘Redemption, Justification, or Salvation’.¹¹ Christ alone is the means of salvation. Justification is fully achieved on the cross and never depends on human faith or works. We are justified by Christ alone and not by our believing. The preaching of ministers is a means to reveal justification, says Richardson, but not instrumental in the justification of the elect. Faith and repentance can only be considered results of the Holy Spirit’s work in those who are already justified. Faith is an evidence of ‘interest in Christ’, but not a ‘joint-partner with Christ’.

Against the objection that justification in the New Testament often depends on the exercise of faith, Richardson explains that faith is diversely understood in Scripture. While sometimes it means knowledge or belief, it can also mean doctrine or the object of faith. In many cases faith is ‘put for Christ’, says Richardson. When Scripture says that we are ‘justified by faith’, that we are ‘saved by faith’ and so on, this means that we are justified and saved by Christ, as what is really proper to Christ is in Scripture often attributed to faith as well. The purpose is to show our union with him in his faith, which becomes our saving faith, says Richardson. It is, in other words, the faith of Christ, not our own faith, which justifies and saves.¹² This union with Christ is not a product of human faith, but faith is a product of a prior union between Christ and the elect.

Richardson’s notion of election rests on the assertion that God is love, rather than on a theory of predestination. The love of God is infinite, and therefore God has always loved the elect, even before they believed: ‘[T]he elect were ever in the love of God, and did ever so appear to Him as just and righteous in and by Christ’, says Richardson. God has never been at enmity with his people, even when he hides and seems angry. In defence, Richardson frequently quotes the words of II Timothy 1. 9 on the grace that ‘was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time’. Richardson does not use the term ‘justification from eternity’, but he comes close, arguing that justification is first to be considered ‘in the will of God’, which had no cause or beginning before it, being eternal and infinite. From the fact that God’s will is eternal, the elect are said to be saved ‘before the world’. This is a justification ‘in purpose’, which precedes the ‘act or execution’ of it in Christ, where justification is ‘actually done’.¹³ But the mere purpose of justification seems to be identical with the justification it anticipates, which is why the justified can be said to always have appeared so in the sight of

¹⁰ A defence of Crisp can be found in Samuel Richardson, *Divine Consolations* (London, 1649).

¹¹ Samuel Richardson, *Justification by Christ Alone* (London, 1647), Chapter 2, obj. 16.

¹² Richardson, 1647, Chapter 3, obj. 18.

¹³ Richardson, 1647, Chapter 5, obj. 25.

God. Though nothing is said about the philosophical presuppositions for these claims, this idea clearly resembles Platonising theologies, where the eternal forms are said to be always present in the mind of God.

As with Crisp, it is clear that for Richardson the eternal justification of the elect was not abstract speculation without spiritual relevance, but a matter of pastoral care. Richardson opposes every tendency to place the event of justification in a feeling of assurance, as he argues that justification in the conscience is not justification itself. In other words, we need not fear that we are not justified, even though we do not feel the full comfort of our justification yet. Assurance of justification is necessary to our comfort, but justification does not depend upon our knowledge of it. To make God's forgiveness depend on the intensity of human repentance is to substitute human works for Christ. But '[w]e have made a Christ of our works, tears and crying long enough', says Richardson in his 'Divine Consolations' of 1649.¹⁴ This resonates with Crisp's so-called anti-nomian view, that the 'terrors of the law' are not required before the gospel can be preached.

The Impact of the Doctrine on Baptist Thinking

That Richardson was far from being the only Baptist to hold such views is evident from William Kiffin's foreword to Richardson's treatise on justification. The first London Confession contains traces of similar conceptions of the role of the law and faith as the manifestation of a prior justification. The so-called anti-nomian perspective is apparent from its claim that the gospel is said to in 'no way' require the 'terrors of the law' for the sinner to receive Christ, while faith is said to be the 'manifestation' of justification.¹⁵ Edward Drapes, another early Particular Baptist, also defended ideas integral to the doctrine of justification from eternity in his *Gospel Glory* of 1649.

Drapes developed his arguments in opposition to certain forms of spiritualism, that saw the cross as an inner experience, rather than a done historical reality.¹⁶ But 'Christ's death at Jerusalem is the offering for sin', says Drapes, 'not Christ's death in any one's heart'. The 'virtue' of Christ's death can even be said to be from before the foundation of the world, as Christ, in accordance with the King James translation of Revelations 13. 8, was 'slain before the foundation of the world'. There was a covenant made

¹⁴ Samuel Richardson, 'Divine Consolations' in *Collected Writings 1645–1658*, Vol. 1 (Lulu.com 2016), p. 442.

¹⁵ First London Confession 1644, §25; §28. Cf. the 1689 Baptist Confession (based on the Westminster Confession), §11,4, where the elect are said not to be personally justified until Christ is 'applied'.

¹⁶ Edward Drapes, *Gospel Glory* (Francis Tyton: London, 1649), pp. 43ff. Drapes' opponents may have been Schwenkfeldians or other spiritualists who developed into Quakerism.

between God and Christ wherein it was decreed that Christ should die in time, but the virtue of that death was from eternity in the eyes of the Father. Christ's death had an influence into times past as well as those to come. Thus Christ's death was an eternal sacrifice. It was offered in time, but the influences of it reached eternity, as the sacrifice was fully accepted by the Father, who viewed it since it was offered. What is only actually done with us in time, was truly present with Him before all time, who is not included in any time.

The notion that justification is prior to faith even reappears in John Bunyan's 'The Pharisee and the Publican' of 1685. Though Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* may be the unrivalled illustration of the *ordo salutis*, its author seems to have held to a conception of the *ordo* diverging from the orthodox. If we are justified only after coming to faith, then this means that the Holy Ghost, who works faith in us, must dwell in us before we are justified, argued Bunyan, who distinguished between justification before God on the one hand, and justification to the understanding and conscience on the other. A man may be justified before God, even when he himself 'knoweth nothing thereof' and while 'he hath not faith about it, but is ungodly'¹⁷, said Bunyan, while bemoaning the readiness of the spirit of the world to cry out against those who preach the 'freeness and fulness of the Gospel'.¹⁸ The basic pastoral concerns of his precursors seem to have been shared by Bunyan here.

An Eternal and Immanent Act of God

The next generation to espouse these views was represented by the English Baptist preachers John Brine (1703-1765) and John Gill (1697-1771). While justification from eternity had only played an *ad hoc* role in Crisp's and Richardson's thinking, with Brine we see it developed as a core doctrine under the heading 'eternal justification'.¹⁹ The pivotal idea here, being crucial for Gill also, was that justification is an immanent act of God. Brine, who succeeded John Skepp as the pastor at Currier's Hall, Cripplegate, explained this in his treatise *A Defence of the Doctrine of Eternal Justification* of 1732.²⁰ Justification is alone a matter of how God sees a person. From this it follows that God's decree to punish sin in his Son rather than in his elect, is in itself the justification of the elect in the sight of God.

¹⁷ John Bunyan, 'The Pharisee and the Publican' in *The Works: Being Several Discourses Upon Various Divine Subjects*, Vol. 2 (London: Gardner, 1737), p. 709.

¹⁸ John Bunyan, *The Doctrine of Law and Grace Unfolded* (London, 1659), p. 2.

¹⁹ Another influence may have been Joseph Hussey (1660-1726). Hussey understood Galatians 2. 16 as saying that we are justified 'by the faith of Jesus Christ' and took it to mean that the elect are justified in Christ before coming to faith. See Joseph Hussey, *The Glory of Christ Unveil'd*, etc. (London, 1706).

²⁰ John Skepp (1675-1721) is often associated with so-called Hyper-Calvinism, but I have not found evidence that he taught the particular idea of justification from eternity.

Justification is consequently also an eternal act, meaning that the elect are eternally beheld as justified in the mind of God.

As no act of man can be an instrument in those acts of God which are immanent, faith understood as an exercise of the human will, is in no way instrumental in justification. When Paul said that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness, Brine, with reference to Maresius, argues that the ‘faith’ in the context of Romans should be taken ‘metonymically’ for ‘Christ being apprehended by faith’ as in Galatians 3. 25.²¹ As an act or work of ours, faith cannot be ‘the matter’ of justification, says Brine. While faith may be reckoned our own, as we are the subjects of it, the righteousness by which we are justified is not our own. Faith receives the righteousness that justifies, but it cannot be righteousness itself or the ‘impulsive’, ‘moving cause’ of justification, which is an act of pure and free grace, without any motive in the creature. Faith ‘beholds and views’ justification but does not ‘give being’ to it by imputing the righteousness of Christ. Justification by faith is the ‘comfortable knowledge’ or ‘perception’ of that ‘gracious privilege’. Faith is not, however, in itself a manifestation of God’s eternal love. If it was, we would have a constant sense of God’s love to us, says Brine. The external manifestation of God’s favour and election is in the gospel, while the internal manifestation is by the Spirit. But faith only perceives the manifestation of God’s love as revealed in the gospel and in the Spirit. For this reason, it is possible that one believer has a fuller discovery and assurance of his justification than another.

These ideas were further developed by John Gill in a chapter of his *Doctrinal Divinity* named ‘Justification as an Eternal and Immanent Act of God’.²² Being an ‘immanent act in the divine mind’, justification is not just before faith, but from eternity, says Gill, as he identifies that which is immanent to the divine mind with that which is ‘from eternity’.²³ If God’s plan to justify sinners is not by itself already a justification of sinners, then justification happens outside God, making it either intrinsic to human beings or a relation between human beings and something which God does not completely control, such as a moral law. But, according to Gill, the eternal justification of the elect rests solely on the eternal union between the elect and Christ, flowing from the love of God.²⁴ Justification follows from the eternal union of the elect with Christ in the will of God to justify sinners on the cross.

²¹ Brine refers to ‘Hydra Socin., Vol. III, Maresius, Ch. xxi., p. 604’.

²² For more on Gill’s version of the doctrine, see George M. Ella, *John Gill and Justification from Eternity: A Tercentenary Appreciation 1697-1997* (Go Publications, 1998).

²³ Cf. Karl Barth, CD IV.1 (London: T&T Clark, 1975), pp. 554ff. ‘That we live as righteous men is not an immanent determination of our existence [...] In Him I am already the one who will be this righteous man.’

²⁴ Gill lists four ways in which this union takes place. John Gill, *The Doctrines of God’s Everlasting Love to His Elect*, etc. (London: Aaron Ward, 1732).

Justification happens from eternity, as God's decision to justify the elect is in itself a justification of the elect, says Gill. But it also happens in time. Christ had the sins of the elect imputed to him when he died on the cross, and they were justified again, when Christ in his resurrection was justified 'as a public person'.²⁵ Justification in time, understood as the public declaration of an already existing righteousness, further happens by faith in the consciousness of the justified, on the one hand, and by works in the eyes of others, on the other hand. By this distinction Gill manages to harmonise the idea of justification from eternity with Paul's remarks on justification by faith in the Epistle to the Romans, as well as the notion of justification by works in the Epistle of James. Again there seem to have been pastoral concerns, as this distinction makes it clear that our eternal righteousness depends neither on our degree of faith nor on good works in time.

At any rate, these ideas of justification had practical consequences for how the gospel was to be preached. Gill asserted that if there is no revelation made unto a person, then no faith is required of that person.²⁶ Brine also argued that faith is not a demand of the law, since faith is not 'a righteousness free from imperfection'. It may just as well be required of sinners to form divine and supernatural principles in their own souls as to 'get faith', said Brine, for both are works proper to God. The exhortation to 'get faith' does not debase and humble proud sinners, but rather swells them up as they imagine that they are 'possessed of a power which they are not'.

Objections to the Doctrine

It is not hard to see why some have believed the theology of Gill to be responsible for the alleged lack of evangelistic fervour in eighteenth-century Particular Baptist life before and during the 'great awakenings'. Even if Gill was in fact not against 'invitations', a case can be made that only with the theology of Andrew Fuller did Baptist theology adapt to the modern missional approach. Though the gospel is, strictly speaking, not a law but a message of grace, it requires the obedience of 'saving faith', Fuller argued in his *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* of 1786, as sins are only pardoned after being repented by the sinner.²⁷ The gospel is to be preached to all people, as all are required to have faith. With Fuller's missional theology, leading to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society, the notion of justification from eternity lost its influence in nineteenth-century Baptist theology, except for small groups of so-called Primitive Baptists who

²⁵ John Gill, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity* (London, 1769) II,5,2.

²⁶ John Gill, *Faith in God and his Word*, etc. (London, 1754), p. 31.

²⁷ Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1786), part II, prop. 3; *The Complete Works of Rev. Andrew Fuller*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Lincoln, Edmands & Company, 1833), p. 286.

rigorously opposed the new missionary methods. In the British context Strict and Particular Baptists defended the doctrine against Charles Spurgeon's somewhat 'ambivalent' views about justification.²⁸

The doctrine of justification from eternity did not, however, become the exclusive property of the primitives, as it reappeared in the writings of Dutch neo-Calvinist minister Abraham Kuyper.²⁹ This sparked some controversy in Dutch reformed theology.³⁰ Though acknowledging its sincere 'religious' motivation, G.C. Berkouwer criticised the doctrine for what he perceived as a tendency to move justification and redemption out of time into eternity.³¹ As everything occurring in time merely formalises or illustrates what has been 'molded in eternal quietness', even the reality of the cross is swallowed up in the still waters of eternity, argued Berkouwer, noting a 'remarkable correspondence' between the anti-nomianism associated with the doctrine and the conception of time and eternity in the kind of idealism that debases time and history, as well as God's acts in history. There is, argued Berkouwer, no place for an eternal justification side by side with a justification in time. Berkouwer concluded that we need to centre on the historical revelation of God in Christ, rather than on his eternal decrees outside revelation.

Following these objections, it seems that justification must be understood much more dynamically, as a real change taking place historically. The charge of anti-nomianism easily follows if this is not the case, as the doctrine of justification from eternity can easily be misunderstood as implying that the elect were never really considered unrighteous. This objection was made by the Particular Baptist preacher Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) in a dialogue between 'Godliness' and 'Antinomian', as it was argued against the doctrine that persons cannot simultaneously have the status of unjust and justified.³² The point was not here that the justified are not also sinners (as in *simul peccator et justus*), but that justified sinners cannot also be considered as having the status of unjust. But if justification is from eternity, this is exactly the case. While for Keach this counted against the doctrine of justification from eternity, the objection

²⁸ Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995); Alexander Asciutto, 'Charles Spurgeon's Ambivalent View on Justification', <<http://www.mercyuponall.org/2017/12/13/charles-spurgeons-ambivalent-view-on-justification/>> [accessed 01 June 2018]

²⁹ Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), pp. 367ff.

³⁰ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 267. As eternity precedes time, being a divine act of grace effected outside of us, justification must also precede faith. Justification does not 'spring' from the consciousness, but is 'mirrored' in it.

³¹ At least as it was formulated by Alexander Comrie in response to a 'neo-nomianism' that saw faith as an act of human beings, making them partly responsible for their own justification. G.C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 148.

³² Benjamin Keach, *The Travels of True Godliness* (1683) (1831), pp. 125ff.

suggests that it must be understood dialectically in the sense of holding two opposite truths about human beings simultaneously. Human beings are simultaneously counted as unjust (perceived in themselves, as the old Adam) and just (as perceived in Christ).

There is, however, admittedly something quite Platonic about the idea of justification from eternity as it was often construed. God was said to be timeless and immutable, he does not change, his decrees are settled once and for all, and so on, which is why justification must also be eternal. But following contemporary post-theism it could easily be argued, as Berkouwer did, that the philosophical conception of eternity as abstract timelessness and immutability cannot really be used in a biblical notion of justification. Jürgen Moltmann has argued that a true trinitarian theology must be based on the revelation of the incarnate Christ that dies on the cross rather than on classical theism's metaphysical notions of an abstract, immutable God that does not engage in human history.³³ Insofar as the doctrine of justification from eternity seems to depend on such an abstract metaphysical theism rather than the living God of the Bible, it may be argued that a truly biblical theology does not leave much room for the doctrine's conception of justification.

Towards a Reconstruction of the Doctrine

The doctrine of justification from eternity does not replace traditional protestant or evangelical doctrines, but radically changes them from within. Most fundamentally, it changes the ontological status of historical events from causes into signs: Conversion, faith, and works are never causes, but signs of something which is already the case prior to the sign. In an important difference from the Puritan *ordo salutis*, these are not, however, necessary signs, but contingent expressions of an eternal truth that is quite independent of any sign. The gospel is good 'news' in the sense that it uncovers a grace that was literally given 'before the times of the ages' (II Timothy 1. 9-10). But if we are to avoid the dangers of a too rigid Platonism, we need to explain how this does not leave history void of meaning. The false dichotomy between making justification dependent on historical factors on the one hand or making it a static, transcendent, and abstract truth on the other, should be avoided.

For a reconstruction of the doctrine to work, we need a renewed reflection on the relationship between time and eternity. The cross of Christ must be made the basis on which all theological statements about God are made.³⁴ It could be argued that this is exactly what the doctrine of

³³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), pp. 313ff.

³⁴ Ibid.

justification from eternity does, as it makes the justification of sinners on the cross foundational in our understanding of eternal truths. Gill at least suggested that justification from eternity implies a kind of sublapsarianism, as God is said to justify the ungodly (Romans 4. 5), that is, the elect conceived as sinners.³⁵ Justification is as such eternally true, because it anticipates the cross and the resurrection as historical events. Eternity, we might say, anticipates or even takes place in humanity's union with Christ on the cross as the centre of history, determining everything else.

Saying that justification is 'from eternity' does not necessarily mean 'from infinite time before creation' but could be taken to mean 'from the eternal God'. The point is to emphasise that justification is alone a work of God, as when Gill and Brine argued that justification is an immanent act of God and is thus not dependent on historical circumstances. Justification happens, to use a phrase from Karl Barth's commentary to Romans, in the 'eternal moment', in which humanity is transferred from death to life.³⁶ But this does not make historical reality superfluous or a mere reflection of eternal truths, as this eternal moment takes place historically in the cross of Christ. Christ's death happened in time, but it was an eternal sacrifice as the influences of it reached eternity.³⁷ The 'eternity' of justification does not depend on the metaphysics of classical theism, but on the fact that the cross and the resurrection have revolutionary consequences for all of human history. That we are justified from eternity simply means that God is in Christ always the crucified God, to borrow Moltmann's phrase.

The merit of the doctrine of justification from eternity is that it collapses all artificial scholastic distinctions between the sufficiency and efficacy of the atonement. All for whom Christ died are effectively justified. Repentance and faith are not conditions that are to be fulfilled to make justification efficient. But what rightly raises the concern of many is the particularism in many cases associated with the idea, as it was often persistently argued that Christ only died for the elect, and not for the whole world.³⁸ It is especially noteworthy how John Gill, in his comments on Crisp's sermons, frequently seems to have felt a need to explain how Crisp's strong claims about grace were only true for the elect. But Gill's persistence is, perhaps ironically, enough to suggest that a non-particularistic understanding of justification from eternity is actually quite plausible.

An alternative to the soteriological particularism often associated with the doctrine can, perhaps surprisingly, be found in parts of the self-same

³⁵ John Gill, *The Doctrine Of Justification*, etc. (London: George Keith, 1750), §1.

³⁶ Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 404.

³⁷ Edward Drapes, *Gospel Glory* (Francis Tyton: London, 1649), pp. 43ff.

³⁸ The particularistic idea of a limited atonement is arguably at odds with Romans 5. 18-19. See Thomas Talbott, *The Inescapable Love of God*, 2nd edn (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014).

Baptist tradition which engendered it; for example, Samuel Richardson, mentioned above. Though much of his work suggests a notion of election much in line with seventeenth-century Reformed and Puritan orthodoxy, his main concern was hardly particularism, but the unconditionality of grace. In his final work, *A discourse of the torments of hell*, Richardson argued that 'hell' does not mean an endless state of torture after death. Though seemingly suggesting the final annihilation of the godless, Richardson in conclusion argued that there are in fact no limits to God's grace: 'It is more for his glory to save all, than to save a few.'³⁹ This perspective was taken up by Primitive Baptist Universalists, who, perhaps influenced by eighteenth-century theologians James Relly and James Murray, held that 'the elect' are not so at the expense of the non-elect, but simply those to whom the universal truth of the gospel is revealed here and now, 'in time'.⁴⁰ The separation following from the judgment on the cross and in the resurrection is not one between actual individuals, but between the old, unjust creation in Adam and the new, righteous creation in Christ.

Following this perspective, while all are eternally justified in Christ, only the elect are justified and saved here and now in time. As implied in the concept of 'time salvation', sometimes associated with Primitive Baptist theology, salvation in time is conditional upon hearing and believing the gospel. Salvation means, in line with Hebrews 2. 15, to be saved from the fear of death, when believing that Christ has conquered death. Justification from eternity does not make preaching superfluous, but salvation happens concretely as human beings hear the gospel and understand their justification in Christ. As held by the Primitive Baptist Universalists, 'saved' believers are distinguished from the 'unsaved' simply by enjoying the comfort of knowing their salvation here and now, while unbelievers are still unaware that they are already saved in principle.

On this basis, the particular election of concrete individuals should be understood in teleological (or eschatological) terms. As the eighteenth-century American Baptist preacher Elhanan Winchester argued, there is both a particular and a general redemption: the church is redeemed in particular in order to preach the gospel for the rest of the world, which was redeemed in general.⁴¹ This general redemption of the world becomes partly manifest historically as people come to faith by hearing the gospel, but fully at the eschaton at the end of the aeons.

³⁹ Samuel Richardson, *A discourse of the torments of hell* (London, 1658), pp. 95ff. The first edition is unnamed. It might in principle be a different author, but there are linguistic similarities to Richardson's earlier works.

⁴⁰ See Howard Dorgan, *In the Hands of a Happy God: The "No-Hellers" of Central Appalachia* (Univ. Tennessee Press, 1997); James Relly, *Epistles*, etc. (London, 1776), pp. 27ff. James Relly held, like Barth later, that Christ is the one elect of God in whom rejected humanity is judged by participating in Christ's death, but justified by participating in his righteousness.

⁴¹ Elhanan Winchester, *The Gospel Preached by the Apostles* (London, 1788).

The Contemporary Relevance of the Doctrine

The idea of justification from eternity was for many of its proponents arguably a way of stating the permanence of the love of God – admittedly in a perhaps somewhat clumsy manner. If so, a post-metaphysical way of saying that we are justified from eternity may simply be to say that we are always already loved, as the atonement on the cross determines the truth about our whole existence prior to every moment in time.⁴²

But is the doctrine of justification from eternity relevant for contemporary issues in theology and church? As suggested above, it is. At least some of the concerns of those like Richardson, Brine, and Gill were shared by twentieth-century ‘Neo-Orthodox’ theologians such as Karl Barth and T.F. Torrance, who similarly argued that justification precedes faith.⁴³ Thus, the doctrine of justification from eternity may facilitate a fruitful dialogue between Neo-Orthodox theology and the older Baptist tradition. The doctrine presents a radical alternative to the rampant subjectivism of contemporary conceptions of faith, which Neo-Orthodoxy also railed against. Both present an account of justification and faith that sees human subjectivity as meaningful only as founded in the reality of a prior divine grace.

James McClendon claimed that the debates on predestination and election are foreign to the broader Baptist tradition (‘small b-baptists’), which is characterised by a narrative understanding of faith rather than reflection on doctrine.⁴⁴ While this is an important observation, the risk of the narrative approach is, however, that it assumes a too subjectivist notion of faith. When telling stories, we easily put much weight on historical circumstances in the life of the believer. Perhaps the doctrine of justification from eternity can be a way of remedying this, by framing or putting the narrative into a larger perspective, so to speak. The doctrine does not diminish the importance of narrative theology, though it sees the deeper meaning and truth about our lives to be outside the narrative. This is what lets the narrative be narrative, and nothing more, nor less: We can confidently tell stories about our life, knowing that the truth about our existence does not ultimately depend upon the exact details of the narrative. The date and time of our conversion is of less importance compared to our ongoing story with the God who loved us before we were born. Just as

⁴² The German expression ‘immer schon’ has in twentieth-century philosophy been applied to that which is always true of our existence in every moment of time, even before we are aware of it.

⁴³ ‘Through union with him we share in his faith [...] Therefore when we are justified by faith this does not mean that it is our faith that justifies us, far from it – it is the faith of Christ alone that justifies us [...]. Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996), pp. 159ff. Moltmann states that ‘[i]t is not my faith that creates salvation for me; salvation creates for me faith.’ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2004), p. 245.

⁴⁴ James McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 23.

important is the assurance that our story with God has a future, even if there are gaps in the narrative.

The doctrine of justification from eternity has the potential of cutting through judgmentalism and doctrinalism, as it makes it impossible to evaluate the status of persons in the sight of God, based on their expressions of faith, holiness, confession, church attendance, and so on. It also means that the ‘success’ of the cross does not depend on the initiative of the church. The church can do its work because the cross is already successful. Being a witness in the world does not mean to preach a ‘turn or burn gospel’ that can hardly be considered good news. To preach the gospel means to speak about what God has already effectively done in Christ, prior to all conversion and repentance.

Rather than trying to defend the doctrine of justification from eternity against the charges of anti-nomianism, why not respond, ‘yes, this is anti-nomianism, though in a very specific sense’? The so-called anti-nomianism following from the doctrine actually makes good sense in a secular or post-secular context, where the main existential question asked by the unchurched is often not as Luther asked: ‘How do I get a gracious God? Perhaps it is rather a search for a deeper truth that can embrace the fragmented lives of post-modernity, that must be met by the church’s preaching. The gospel does not depend on the ‘law’ or other contingent historical circumstances. That we are justified from eternity means that the church does not need to teach the unchurched about the law and the wrath of God before preaching the gospel. That we are justified from eternity – always already loved by God – in spite of everything, is the eternal truth about human life that the church must preach to the world.

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Church, Theology, and Learning Disability

Faith Bowers

BUild, the Baptist Union Initiative with people with Learning Disabilities, 1983-2017, was primarily practical and pastoral, but theological questions also arose. Many 'in the pews' rarely wrestle with theology but disability prompts reflection on what they believe. The need for help with this continues.

Introduction: BUild

The work that became BUild¹ was prompted by a Junior Church leader faced with three children who had Down's Syndrome. Would they be capable of understanding that God loved them? How could teachers nurture faith? Those questions prompted others. With the national move to 'community care', subnormality hospitals were being closed and residents moved to small group homes in residential areas. They would find local churches different from their hospital chapels. Welcoming churches might need advice on how best to include those with severe learning disabilities (hereafter abbreviated to LDs). There was also pastoral concern for families, expressed most keenly among BUild's founders by one who in youth had watched parents struggle with her LD sister, little helped by their church.

Some concerns were more theological, arising from the age-old problem of suffering. These included:

- How should Christians understand disability within God's creation?
- Does the ministry of healing have a place when disability is part of a person's very being?
- How are LDs perceived? Are they fully human?
- How far is this a Baptist or general Christian concern?
- How do such disabilities affect Church life?

¹ BUild records are in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford. The story is on the Baptist Historical Society website: <<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ioxiw6jikhfkw50/Bowers%20Faith%20BUild%20article.pdf?dl=0>> [accessed 20 August 2018] BUild publications include Faith Bowers (ed.), *Let Love Be Genuine* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1985); Bryan George, *The Almond Tree* (Collins, 1985); Faith Bowers, *Who's This Sitting In My Pew?* (London: Triangle (SPCK), 1988); Faith Bowers (ed.), *Complete in Christ* (physical disabilities) (BUGB, 1996); Faith Bowers (ed.), *Treat with Special Honour* (learning disabilities) (BUGB, 1997); Siôr Coleman, *Friends of Jesus* (2002); Faith Bowers (ed.), *When Weak, Then Strong: Disability in the life of the church* (Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church for BUild, 2008).

- How does intellectual impairment affect access to believers' baptism, communion, and church membership?
- How can teaching be made more accessible?
- What can be learned from work with LDs?

Theologians can, and do, wrestle with such questions but the answers are not all found in academic study. Some only come through experience where people live and work alongside those with disabilities. This has been striking in the work of L'Arche, where people live together in small communities. L'Arche's founder, Jean Vanier, insisted this was a two-way process, not simply being carers or cared-for.

The present author is a Baptist historian, not a theologian, but has lived for almost fifty years with a devout Christian son who has clear pastoral gifts. He also has Down's Syndrome. Two-way family learning has contributed to the wider Baptist work. BUild's ministry helped to enhance life for many, and gave a platform where people could speak of experience of disability *in the church context*, revealing that many would have welcomed more help with those questions. This paper cannot provide full answers but may help pastors understand better those who struggle with them in the silence of their souls.

That Junior Church leader took her questions to a special-needs teacher and together they approached the education officer of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). When he raised their concerns through the *Baptist Times*, he found they were shared by many in the churches. A 'Working Group on Mental Handicap and the Church' quickly formed, developing into BUild. The initial lay group drew in some ministers to help with theological concerns. Prominent among these were the Revd David Clark, with relevant chaplaincy experience, the Revd Dr Roger Hayden, Superintendent of the Western Area of BUGB, and the Revd Dr Richard Kidd, Principal of Northern Baptist College. Hayden and Kidd successively chaired the group.

BUild gathered the limited experience of churches. Two in Scotland already had large special groups for worship and teaching, and there was one small group in London. Soon more churches formed groups. Special provision was not seen as an alternative to inclusive mainstreaming, not 'either ... or' but 'both ... and': special teaching, valuable in itself, helped integration. As LDs learned more about God, they got more from church services, and learned about when to be quiet and when to join in.

Most Christians do not doubt that God's love must encompass LDs: spirituality cannot be restricted to the intelligent. We now know with more certainty than in 1983 that many LDs are capable of responding to God's

love. That presents Christians with the challenge of finding effective ways to communicate the Gospel when they cannot depend on words, either spoken or written.

How Should Christians Understand Disability Within God's Creation?

Thinking about God's love for LDs raises awkward questions. Many faced with chronic disability ponder these, but few speak of them easily. Ministers probably also find them difficult and hope that those affected will not wrestle with theology. Other 'comforters' rush in, with well-meaning but clumsy phrases that fail to console. If faith is to survive and support those with disabilities and those who love them, the difficult questions have to be faced.

There may be no right or wrong answers. Various approaches suit different people. Christians do not easily accept 'blind fate' — 'whatever will be will be' — but may feel that God sends everything for a purpose. Others believe that things 'go wrong' because of evil forces active in the world, yet look for God's love to prevail. Disability is a common part of the human condition, but is not easy to accept, especially where genetic abnormality is present from conception. Human instinct expects creation to be 'perfect'. That is how we usually interpret the repeated Genesis phrase, 'God saw that it was good'.

In the filmed seminar, *Blessings out of Brokenness*,² a mother of two children with multiple disabilities, stated, 'I don't have any problems with the sovereignty of God: I know he's to blame for it all.' Her presentation of faith in adversity prompted a disturbing ripple of audience laughter. Can someone believe that and still believe in a God of Love? Many do, while others turn away from God.

Some Christians avoid the blame-game as unprofitable and see God's sovereignty in the power to overcome evil with good, bringing something good out of unpromising situations. In a television programme, a young woman with Friedrich's Ataxia,³ who had a positive approach to life in her wheelchair, was asked how she felt as a Christian. She replied, 'I believe God makes some people handicapped to be good for the able-bodied',⁴ making them count their blessings. One has to admire someone who takes comfort in that, but how does it make the able-bodied feel?

While people with physical disabilities and mental illness appear in the Bible, there is little about learning disability. In biblical times few LDs

² Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, film seminar with Joni Eareckson Tada, in four parts, 1982.

³ A progressive disease of the nervous system, not affecting cognitive function.

⁴ Interviewed on 'Songs of Praise', BBC 1, 12 February 1984.

would have survived and those who did would have been absorbed into a labour-intensive, agrarian workforce more readily than into today's high-tech world. Perhaps lack of biblical example makes LDs easier to overlook, but both Testaments encourage compassion and justice for marginalised minorities. Churches have always felt called to care for the sick and disabled.

Theologians down the centuries have wrestled with the 'problem of pain'.⁵ The theology preached affects churches' attitudes and activities, influencing lay members, often subconsciously. Isaiah (53.4ff) knew many think suffering is punishment sent by God. Ministers may not realise how often parents hear this, probably in inverted form as 'you do not deserve this'. Others suggest they are 'special parents' to whom God has entrusted a 'special child'. Neither presents an attractive idea of God. Others kindly assure parents that God loves these 'holy innocents'. Sadly that has led some churches to decline formal welcome (infant baptism or Baptist dedication) to babies known to have severe disability. Unfortunately this happens more where parents are on the fringe of the church, not active in the fellowship. Parents greeted with 'What's the point?' are unlikely to hear 'God loves this child'. Sadly families have then rejected churches at a time when they needed pastoral support.

John 9 shows attitudes still familiar today. The disciples ask, 'Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' (vv.2-3). Jesus rejects sin as the cause, but his enigmatic reply suggests further questions. Neighbours cannot believe the miracle. The authorities turn to the parents, who were doubtless used to that, even though their son always had his own mind and voice. Their irritation shows: 'Ask him. He is of age. He will speak for himself.' (v.21). The man himself is exasperated: 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from and yet he opened my eyes ... If this man were not from God he could do nothing!' (vv.30-33).

As a visiting preacher, I once took this text. At the door, everyone wanted to speak about their disability or that of someone close to them. A taboo had been lifted that morning: people felt free to admit to much silent suffering. Similarly, after contributing to a BUild book, a senior Baptist minister sometimes began to mention his epilepsy. Always someone there, often newly diagnosed, told him how his admission gave hope. There is a place for brave silence but sometimes exposure helps others.

Some Old Testament verses suggest God only wants perfection: sacrificial animals and priests must be perfect (Leviticus 21.18-20; 22.20ff).

⁵ See *British Journal of Theological Education*, 8 (2), Summer 1996, issue on theological education and disability ed. by Richard Kidd; Brian Brock and John Swinton (eds.), *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011); Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

Such verses may not figure as sermon texts, yet the ideas have long life. A minister found some people declined to receive communion from his hands, having been damaged in the womb by thalidomide.⁶ At least the Israelites were not to ‘revile the deaf or put a stumbling-block before the blind’ (Leviticus 19.14).

When Richard Kidd arranged a BUild ‘theological consultation’, anticipating a dozen participants, mostly ministers, forty arrived, mostly parents who had slogged through the tough ‘set’ book.⁷ They came eager to discuss, to share experience and to ask searching questions. That challenging dynamic was repeated at subsequent consultations. For the second, Kidd prepared advance papers on ‘A question of humanity..., divinity..., and community’.⁸ He hoped a publication might result but it proved too hard to satisfy both those not directly affected and parents for whom theological reflection felt too impersonal. Many could not ‘stand outside’ their experience to discuss this, partly because of their underlying sense of guilt.⁹ Such days allowed parents to release feelings normally bottled up inside them, while ministers perhaps learned more about pastoral needs.

Gracious acceptance is likely to be key to ongoing and supportive faith but is not easily achieved. Sadly many reject belief in God altogether. Emotions — anger, doubt, despair — are stirred when creation does not go to plan, or not to human plan. Those who belong to a church may be greatly helped, or not, by the way their church views disabling variations from the human norm.

Does the Ministry of Healing Have a Place?

Some evangelical attitudes and practices may prove inadequate, not least those majoring on praise and prosperity, reward, and healing miracles. The ministry of healing can present a real problem for LDs, because a lifelong condition is part of who the person is: Rachel without Down’s Syndrome would not be Rachel. In the 1980s some American surgeons tried surgery to make Down’s features look normal. Since this could not improve their mental development, such changes in appearance were only addressing the negative assumptions some people make about those with a visible learning disability. Where prayers for healing seem unanswered, this adds to people’s sense of failure and guilt. Many LDs distinguish between long-term

⁶ Craig Millward, in *When weak, then Strong*, pp.85-88.

⁷ David A. Pailin, *A Gentle Touch: from a theology of handicap to a theology of human being* (London: SPCK, 1992).

⁸ Luther King House, Manchester, 10-11 April 1992. Papers and a digest of comments in BUild file, Angus Library.

⁹ The third consultation, at Alvechurch October 1997, was on *Treat with Special Honour*.

conditions, which they accept, and illnesses which prompt fervent prayers for healing. Acceptance is key to healing.

A few conditions can be detected early in pregnancy, but others only become apparent at birth or later, caused by genetic abnormalities, oxygen deprivation, biochemical imbalance, later illness, or accident. Whatever the cause or nature, disability presents challenges for the child, parents, siblings, and churches wanting to be supportive.

Many Christians take a pro-life stance. With prenatal testing and abortion offered when disability is detected, pro-lifers may become the only parents raising children with Down's syndrome. Pro-life advocates should accept some responsibility to support families: where a church takes a baby with disabilities to its corporate heart, that makes a huge difference.

How Are LDs Perceived? Are They Fully Human?

Rarely voiced yet underlying attitudes is that uncomfortable question: Are LDs fully human? That sounds shocking but is suggested by 'subnormality', which in the 1980s was current language, used of hospital wards. Special schools were further defined as being for those 'severely' or 'medium subnormal' — ESN(S) or ESN(M).

LDs differ from the 'norm', but, as a Mencap poster put it, 'They may not think as fast but they feel as deeply'. Parents naturally affirm their child's humanity. As a mother, I found it disconcerting to hear a preacher define the humanity of Jesus in this way: 'When we say Christ became man, we know certain things about him: like he had forty-six chromosomes ...'.¹⁰ My son has forty-seven.

Kindly suggestions of 'holy innocents' and 'angels unaware' deny full humanity. Those with profound disabilities are even described as 'cabbages'. The majority of LDs are not mindless: they develop a sense of good and bad, right and wrong, praise and blame, giving and receiving love, encouragement and disapproval, apology and forgiveness, inclusion and rejection, often with experience of the unhappier alternatives. In this context, sin is almost welcomed as a mark of humanity. Mothers of young LDs delight in tales of 'wickedness'. Deliberately doing something the child knows is 'bad' is not the act of a 'sinless cherub' but a reassuring confirmation of being human.

People often stereotype LDs by their condition, but common symptoms do not make all the same. Stereotypes have a measure of truth but are dehumanising. Many with Down's are loving, happy, musical ... but it is sad to dismiss attractive qualities as part of the disability rather than

¹⁰ Sermon by Colonel Harry Dean, Salvation Army, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, August 1984.

individual personality. God knows people by name (Isaiah 43.1): names are important to God and also to LDs. Someone with little speech may manage, ‘I’m John. What’s your name?’ Churches are often better than the world at looking beyond the condition to the individual. Those who know LDs by name are less likely to doubt their humanity.

BUild’s book, *Let Love Be Genuine*, took its title from Keith Clements’ reflection on Romans 12.9, ‘the genuineness of love must include acceptance of what is genuinely there, as contrasted with what we simply imagine or wish to be there’.¹¹ A child with accepting parents will probably be helped to develop better than one whose parents deny the disability. Those who accept their own disability philosophically and get on with life as best they can are happier than those who rage against something they cannot change. Acceptance can be positive and liberating and it affects spirituality.

People with little experience of disability have strange ideas. Mothers keep their distance from one with a disabled child as if they fear infection. Frances Young, the Methodist theologian, hesitated to take her multiply-disabled son when visiting unfamiliar ‘white’ churches but knew that in black-led fellowships ‘there is no sense there of forcing Arthur on people who would rather not know and cannot cope’.¹²

Negative experience is disturbing. Two men with Down’s syndrome, communicants at home, on holiday went forward to partake but the vicar only gave them a blessing. Both were mature enough to return quietly to their pew, though inwardly seething, and only complained after the benediction. Had they protested at the altar rail, they would doubtless have been seen as at fault, causing a disturbance, rather than the priest who treated them as children.

LDs often retain childlike qualities, like delight in birthdays, but their simple faith, untroubled by intellectual doubts, may be hard won. They know they are ‘different’. Failure and frustration gives many a poor self-image. Those able to go out alone are told by strangers that they should be locked away. They experience kindness too, but that may be mainly institutional, with parties and outings arranged for ‘the disabled’. Being valued for oneself is life-enhancing. For many LDs, conversion is less about ‘salvation from sin’ and more about grasping that *God loves them as they are*. Their spirituality rests on that assurance.

“What can they understand?” people ask, but that implies an intellectual concept, the way able minds think. It is prompted by emphasis on the believer’s personal response to God. Faith need not depend on

¹¹ Keith W. Clements, *A Patriotism for Today* (UK: Collins, 1986).

¹² Frances Young, *Face to Face: A Narrative Essay in the Theology of Suffering* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990).

intelligence: heart and soul, not only mind and strength. Those who function more by intuition than reason sometimes touch heights of spiritual perception. It is good to make the Gospel accessible, but understanding can be entrusted to the Holy Spirit.

One perception that improved during BUild's time was the attitude of social services. In the 1980s they were often suspicious of religion, some even obstructive: a man's bath time was changed to prevent him attending church. Where a church has made and maintained good relationships, carers of other or no faith have often proved appreciative and helpful.

The past three decades have seen attitudes change. Professor John Swinton of the University of Aberdeen, an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland and registered nurse in both mental health and learning disability, has been a leader in this.¹³ In 1999 the Foundation for Learning Disabilities commissioned Swinton to make a feasibility study on spirituality in the lives of LDs. A conference of this secular Foundation drew people of various faiths; it was a rare pleasure to share with Moslems, Jews and others a common interest in LDs' capacity for spirituality. By September 2001 the Foundation could draw attention in its report introduction to a 'growing body of literature from health and social care professions that spirituality is a basic human need and right'.¹⁴ This is ongoing work,¹⁵ but carers should now recognise LDs' right to religious practice if they express that wish. Researchers, some prompted by BUild, have studied relevant topics for degree studies. LDs' spirituality is no longer hidden behind high walls.

How Far is This a Baptist or General Christian Concern?

Baptist ecclesiology gave its own perspective by wanting personal faith for baptism, the door to the Church. Would a baby known to have severe mental impairment ever qualify? Was there an invisible IQ test for believer's baptism? That seemed the uncomfortable implication when requests for baptism were not taken seriously. What would LDs get from the Ministry of

¹³ Swinton's publications include 'Building a church for strangers: Theology, Church and learning disabilities', *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* (2001) 4 (4), 25-65; 'Spirituality and the lives of people with learning disabilities', *The Tizard Learning Disability Review* (2002) 7 (4), 29-35; *Why are we here? Understanding the spiritual lives of people with learning disabilities* (London: Mental Health Foundation, 2004); and *Enabling communities to meet people with learning disabilities and respond effectively to their expressed spiritual and religious needs: A participatory action research approach*, ed. by Swinton, J., Gangemi, C., Tobanelli, M., Vincenzi, G. (2013), Kairos Forum for people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities.

¹⁴ The Foundation's reports included 'Spirituality in the lives of people with learning disabilities' (2001) and 'Religious Expression: A fundamental human right'; 'What about faith?', 'Why are we here?' and 'No box to tick' (all 2004). See <<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities/publications>> [accessed 26 August 2018].

¹⁵ See for example William C. Gaventa, *Disability and Spirituality: Recovering Wholeness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018).

the Word, so cherished by Baptists? What role could they have as members of a community of faith? Such questions were sharp for Baptists but not unique to them.

Other Evangelicals, who stressed conversion and personal faith, shared such doubts. Some Free Church and Evangelical Anglican ministers declined to baptise such infants: "What's the point? We know God loves them." Changing perceptions takes time, but that is probably heard less often now more churches have observed LDs' spirituality. Higher Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Orthodox have been happier to baptise. At a meeting called by Mencap in 1985, an Orthodox priest observed that as a result they have revered some simple souls as saints.

Ecumenical co-operation has been a happy aspect of this work. Basic Christian teaching is largely held in common. Those who began BUild were helped by Roman Catholics already leading such ministry at St Joseph's Centre in the Westminster Diocese. Believing that all baptised as infants belonged to the church and should be nurtured, they developed methods and materials to prepare LDs for First Communion and Confirmation. Four Church of England dioceses were separately addressing particular aspects of work with LDs.

Baptists were not alone in anticipating community care's impact on churches, but 'bottom up' Baptist structures enabled BUild to develop quickly. Concerns raised by laity in local churches were heard and BUGB's Mission Department recognised the new Working Group. The *Baptist Times* was then still widely read in churches and the editor proved helpful. Today it might be harder to get a new work going, but in 1984 development was rapid. Local churches, ministers' meetings, and colleges welcomed BUild speakers.

Invitations also came from other Christian denominations and secular bodies. BUild contributions included a Pastoral Studies Day Conference at Birmingham University in 1986; Exeter Health Authority Conference, 1987; community care conference at St George's Hospital, London, and the ecumenical Consultative Group on Ministry among Children, 1988; Church of England's Gloucester Diocesan Board of Social Responsibility Conference, 1989; and a Roman Catholic Deanery Care Day in Dorking, 1989. It was an exciting time.

Church Action on Disability (CHAD) was formed ecumenically in 1986 to address all disabilities. BUild was asked to represent LDs. Bringing all under one umbrella sounds logical, with common practical needs and theological challenges. LDs often have physical and sensory impairments, so BUild shared most concerns, although some with other disabilities resist

being grouped with LDs and their advocates, so meetings could be uncomfortable.

BUild's lay activists found themselves in surprising places, not least representing LDs when CHAD went to Lambeth Palace to brief Archbishop George Carey on disability matters. BUild helped compile the Southwark Diocesan Board for Church and Society publication, *Travelling Together: Valuing people with learning disabilities* (October 1995).¹⁶ Contributions to other publications included focused issues of *The Bible in Transmission*,¹⁷ and *The British Journal of Theological Education*.¹⁸ There were radio interviews too. None of this was narrowly Baptist.

Meanwhile, at local level, some churches pooled resources, working ecumenically, both LDs and helpers coming from different churches. As Catholic priest, David Wilson, had observed to BUild founders, "Our aim is the same: to help these people know that Jesus loves them."

BUild made mutually supportive contact with similar Christian work in Switzerland, Australia, the USA, Argentina, and East Africa. Communism valued workers, so little had been done for LDs in Eastern Europe. With political changes, some saw mission opportunities. Through East Glamorgan Association's twinning with the Baptist Union of Poland, BUild members helped run special summer camps. Polish Baptists have since extended such ministry. BUild workers also visited Kosovo with Smile International in 2006.¹⁹

In Britain many were willing to see LDs in a more hopeful light. A new evangelical charity, A Cause for Concern, provided Christian homes, and led to Prospects to develop spirituality.²⁰ A number of Baptist churches made links, and BUild had good relations with Prospects and other Christian organisations serving LDs, including Faith and Light, begun by Catholics. Styles differed, but groups variously linked to Prospects, Faith and Light, and BUild have all celebrated happily together.

How Do Such Disabilities Affect Church Life?

LDs need to feel welcome in the church, accepted for who they are, without fuss. The world does not always welcome them. Church attitudes are influenced by the theology preached, but an inclusive understanding is not confined to any particular kind: evangelical, radical, conservative, liberal, all

¹⁶ The present author was on the editorial group.

¹⁷ Bible Society, Spring 2004.

¹⁸ Vol. 8 (2), Summer 1996.

¹⁹ David Clark and Susan Wright led.

²⁰ Jonathan Edwards, former BUGB General Secretary, became an Ambassador for Prospects, which has since merged with others into Livability.

may prove welcoming — or fail to convey welcome. Access aids are less important than attitude. LDs respond to atmosphere, in worship and social times. They enjoy feeling part of friendly conversation, even if saying little. At one BUild conference a man with autism volunteered that he liked his church house group, although he rarely spoke, because “I feel I belong”.

With limited language, LDs rely more on physical senses. Some have no speech, few achieve full clarity and fluency, but many are experts in body language. Gestures, facial expressions and general demeanour speak louder than words. They know whether welcome is genuine or forced: the smile has to come from eyes as well as lips. Friends who are not ‘touchy-feely’ may feel intimidated if LDs, whom they find strange, greet them with hugs and kisses (these ‘vulnerable adults’ will not know that church leaders are sternly warned about inappropriate contact!). Achieving an atmosphere that conveys welcome is not always easy yet is possible.

Philip could take Greeks who wanted to see Jesus to the living man (John 12.21), but down the years most seekers can only see Christ’s followers. Reaching out in friendship can be Gospel proclamation. It is no accident that research into LDs’ spirituality repeatedly reveals that many relate to Jesus primarily as *friend*.

Finding ways to serve helps integration, and many LDs prove reliable workers. Giving out hymn books, catering help, gardening, tidying up, all have been gladly undertaken. A proper pride in being among the church’s reliable workers helps them know they belong. Whatever they can do, if valued by the church, will reinforce their worship.

Prayer is a striking feature of many LDs’ spirituality. It must be good to talk to a friend who does not ask them to repeat and speak clearly! Some pray ‘in tongues’, some in recognisable language. Many have a gift for intercession, often keenly aware of others’ sickness or sadness. Some develop their own ministry of intercessory prayer. One man’s regular prayer was simply “Auntie, Amen”, enough to commend to God the kind woman who looked after him.

How Does Intellectual Impairment Affect Access to Believers’ Baptism, Communion, and Church Membership?

Inclusion in a Baptist church raises questions about believer’s baptism, communion, and church membership. Full participation prompts awkward questions. For an early BUild survey,²¹ one church wrote, ‘It isn’t that we don’t want them, but they wouldn’t understand about commitment’. A braver

²¹ Survey by Audrey Saunders, 1984-5.

minister baptised a man who ‘understood as much as he would ever be able to understand — not the same as a child who would wait till he understood more — so he was baptised’. Another minister agreed to a request for baptism from an older man, resettled near the church. In preparation the minister but did not know what, if anything, was understood. On the day a group of strangers arrived at the church, the candidate’s relatives, eager to learn about the happy change seen in him since going to the church.²² BUild heard of much similar experience as LDs came to faith and people observed the change.

In the early days of BUild it was sobering to hear that ministers, when challenged to take seriously LDs’ requests for baptism, discovered unexpected depths of faith. Special efforts to nurture faith have led to joyful witness. A woman proclaimed, “Jesus is my best mate”. Another sang “Wonderful Love”. One youth was so thrilled to be baptised that he did not notice the unheated water, an icy shock to minister and assistant. Such witness inspires others.

What about understanding the Lord’s Supper? Most know if they are excluded from something important to the worshipping community. They may be distracted by the idea of Christ’s blood (even associating drinking blood with vampires — they watch television!): better perhaps to think about kneading dough and squashing grapes as suffering for a purpose. One newly-baptised girl at her first communion presented bread she had made for all to share. Theological explanation is not the only way to convey the spiritual and sacramental.

Some churches baptise LDs and grant table fellowship but decline full church membership. They may demand a level of understanding and commitment not applied to other members, who are not all regular at worship or church meetings. Understanding may be a false requirement for belonging. Sometimes LDs understand more than is apparent. Churches have seen them sit silent, apparently detached or asleep, yet afterwards they have offered money or practical help in response to something said.

How Can Teaching Be Made More Accessible?

Accessible teaching was an early BUild concern. The 1970 Education Act extended schooling for LDs so that, by the early 1980s, it was clear that many could learn more than was previously assumed. Some took pride in reading but found limited material, since similar reading levels embarrass poor readers in ‘able’ society. Well-illustrated junior non-fiction was good, but suitable religious material proved almost non-existent. Bible stories were

²² Told to author by Paul Jackson, then minister at Westbourne Park.

available for all levels, with illustrations showing adults, so not too childish, but there was nothing to bridge the gap between Bible story and church life today. The market was too small. Church teachers were left to invent their own resources.

BUild encouraged churches to offer special groups, alongside integration into the wider church life. Questions were raised about mainstream integration versus special provision: the ideal is not 'either ... or' but 'both ... and'. Special efforts in worship and fellowship are appreciated in themselves and help with integration, not least by learning that there were times for joining in and times for being quiet to listen, or let others listen. Those who attended the main church services could delight in the worship atmosphere, the music, and the sense of fellowship, even if the sermon was 'over their heads'. They learned from the congregation's approach to worship: quiet and reverent, lively and exuberant; whatever the chosen style, if that felt authentic it could draw them in.

BUild's regular conferences tried to equip churches for this ministry. As the years passed, conferences developed into celebrations with many LDs taking part, eager to share the difference that knowing Jesus had made to their lives.

Help was needed for baptismal preparation. BUild produced a set of four simple booklets for this. Three lay women planned them, with line drawings and minimal text.²³ They decided to begin with the Trinity, surprising the group's ministers: "They want something simple but begin with the most difficult concept!" They reasoned that 'Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' are often heard, so they should provide something, however inadequate, on that. The first booklet looked at the Father Creator (even this needed care: God as loving Father is not always helpful, when many fathers leave where a child has disabilities), at Jesus's life, and at the Spirit, seen especially as the channel to God through prayer. The other booklets focused on the Church, baptism and communion, and discipleship. Further BUild publications included some for LDs themselves, including an illustrated *Lord's Prayer*.

When BUild first challenged churches to attempt special teaching, some people suggested they could tell 'nice' Jesus stories but not the Passion. Could anyone present the Gospel without the Cross? BUild's gut reaction was that it could not be taboo. LDs experience suffering themselves and are often deeply touched by that of others. Introduced carefully to the Passion, they are shocked, saddened, perhaps indignant, yet drawn to the suffering

²³ The BUild Booklets: *Knowing Jesus, The Church, Joining the Church, and Following Jesus*, ed. by Ena Robertson, Susan Wright, and Faith Bowers (BUGB, 1991).

Jesus. They empathise when he is abused: they know about being called ‘bad names’. They can relate to this vulnerable Jesus.

At a BUild conference, when a man with Down’s Syndrome led opening worship, a similar youth asked to lead afternoon devotions. A tiny figure, with thick-lensed glasses and hearing aids, he could barely reach the lectern from which he read a complete Gospel account of Christ’s passion and resurrection — a mammoth passage not usually heard as a single reading. Clearly it meant much to that boy, still fairly new to church. He followed this with the triumphant song, ‘Let the weak say “I am strong”’! Kindness can be over-protective, not least if it prevents Christians from glorying in the Cross.

Visual aids often help. An Anglican vicar, faced with a teenage confirmation candidate, took him to look at something in the church each week: font, pulpit, altar, revealing how much David knew about his church. BUild shared such experience. In a Local Ecumenical Partnership, the Baptist minister used the Catholics’ pictorial Stations of the Cross. Elsewhere a Baptist teacher showed her adult group the embroidered banners. She was surprised that the globe surmounted by a crown was obvious: “God is king of the world”. Less clear was Pilgrim leaving his burden at the Cross: “Oh dear, he left his shopping behind!”

LDs cannot cope with abstract concepts, unless grounded within their experience. A discipleship course on the Fruit of the Spirit used ‘real life’ examples: stroking pets and holding a baby for gentleness, sewing for patience, and so on.²⁴ Choosing appropriate illustrations showed what was understood. The effort to teach slow learners can be rewarding for teachers and learners alike.

Elsewhere an acting group,²⁵ telling the Good Samaritan parable, objected to mugging the traveller. As an alternative, they suggested someone having a fit when shopping. Epilepsy is familiar in the disability world. They retold the story to considerable effect, with shoppers, a clergyman, and bishop passing by on the other side, a drunken tramp becoming their Samaritan. They understood the parable and conveyed it to audiences across the country.

What Can Be Learned From Work With LDs?

Sometimes church work with LDs turns the world upside-down as ‘able’ people learn from those they teach. We are reminded of Isaiah’s suffering servant and the Beatitudes. Turning the world upside down was true of early

²⁴ Bible study devised by the Revd Barbara Stanford, judged excellent by a special needs RE advisor.

²⁵ The Living Stones, with actors having physical and learning disabilities, began in Harlow Baptist Church and had an extensive ministry for several years.

Christianity (Acts 17.6), uncomfortable but exciting. Working with LDs, the godly paradox that what appears weak and useless is valuable and worthy of special honour (I Corinthians 12.23) becomes extra poignant.

The founders of BUild soon found that God makes surprising use of people. On the second week of one special group, one man brought a friend to something good for people like them. Church was new to her but thrilling. Mentally more able than her evangelist, she soon loved to read the Bible. When she was baptised, her mother told their leader she knew little about church — except that it was the best thing that had ever happened to her daughter. Elsewhere in hospital a youth with few words found comfort in his picture Bible, repeatedly pointing out “Jesus”. The boy in the next bed watched and decided to get a Bible himself.²⁶ The ability of Christians of limited language and unclear speech to tell others about Jesus is an upside-down miracle.

A nice failure to distinguish sacred from secular is another endearing feature. One man was so eager to get to church that he regularly prayed, “Traffic lights. Amen.” A special school teacher chuckled that as a Christian she understood when, as items at a fruit shop, one pupil offered, “Apples, pears, love, joy, peace, oranges, patience, bananas...” At the day centre or supermarket such Christians speak readily about Jesus and church. Those used to giving thanks before a meal will do so wherever they are, sometimes embarrassing companions in a restaurants. At such times their speech can be loud and unusually clear. A praise word like ‘Alleluia’ may appear in unexpected contexts, sometimes proving an introduction to fellow Christians. Visiting South Africa soon after apartheid ended, it repeatedly crossed the still awkward divide between black and white.²⁷

Work with LDs gives a fresh perspective on incarnation and the Church as the Body of Christ. The Word became flesh — and down the centuries the Church has devoted great effort to putting it back into words. Words mean little to LDs. Baptists’ Zwinglian approach to the Lord’s Table has perhaps weakened the focus on being ‘Christ’s body’. LDs need to experience God’s love incarnated in God’s people in visible, tangible ways, rather than in words. The challenge is so to *live* the Gospel, in attitudes and in body language, that people are attracted to Christ.

Conclusion

Initially inspired by the inclusive nature of the Gospel and evangelical desire to bring people to Christ, BUild saw lives transformed, providing an answer

²⁶ Example offered by foster mother at a BUild conference.

²⁷ Repeated experience of author’s son, 1998.

about their humanity. When churches opened baptism, communion, and church membership to those whose understanding was hard to assess, they saw joyful witness to Christ. BUild could add little to the perennial questions around the problem of suffering, except more examples of God bringing something good out of what seemed bad to human eyes. We gained deeper awareness of being the Body of Christ.

BUild's pioneering effort drew attention to people previously hidden from society and over three decades helped churches open up to LDs. Special ministries were developed and appreciated. Many experienced the joy of baptism and became active church members. While BUild's primary focus was on local churches, we encouraged theologians to address disability issues. As those involved in BUild grow old, we thank God that LDs are now more visible both within and beyond the church. BUild's pioneering efforts have ended, but the needs, questions, and challenges continue: more people have yet to learn that God loves them.

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Book Reviews

John L. Thomas, Jr, *Why Black Preaching Still Matters: Voices in the Wilderness* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 196 pages. ISBN: 978-1498238977.

Practical theologian, John Thomas, states: 'The main premise of this book is built upon the notion that preaching in the African American religious experience must take seriously the context in which people live, struggle, and die' (p. 11). Thomas develops this theme consistently providing, along the way, a definition of black preaching and an exploration of its theology and context. Chapters include a consideration of the contribution of three of the best-known black preachers over the years (Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Jesse Jackson), a chapter on black women preachers, and suggestions for the future. Thomas' definition is useful in countering a popular caricature of black preaching, namely that it is particularly characterised by matters of style ('creative rhetorical devices', 'jazzy rhythmic modes', 'feverish pitch', and so on). Thomas stresses instead the vital content of black preaching so that its genius lies in its ability to reach beyond the pulpit to the community and its connectedness to the real-life needs of its hearers.

The metaphor of 'wilderness' looms large throughout and receives a chapter (four) to develop it in detail. Here Thomas draws a parallel between the Old Testament Exodus story and the slavery experience of African Americans. In this, he argues, the black preacher played a crucial role in giving expression to community suffering and graphically depicting a promised land for which many were hoping.

Positive features of the book include the aforementioned emphasis on content and context, and the useful identification of four theological streams impacting upon black preaching, namely traditionalist (with its emphasis on faithfulness to the past), spiritualist (stressing belief in the power of God to overcome obstacles), here and now (accepting humanity's role in resolution of conditions), and radical-prophetic (calling into question what is normally accepted). These streams, of course, play their part to one degree or another in the formulation of good preaching in any setting.

Negatively, however, it seems clear that Thomas has imbibed uncritically some of the starker vestiges of classic liberation theology. He acknowledges his 'over-indulgence in social and political matters' (p. 187) but does little to balance his representation of the death of Jesus as having more to do with solidarity with the sufferings of black people than a traditional atonement theory. Granted that black preaching (like any other

preaching) must seek to be relevant to the *Sitz im Leben* of the community, but in doing so it cannot, indeed must not, leave behind the core message of spiritual redemption which lay at the heart of the apostolic commission.

Reviewed by Edwin Ewart

Ian Birch, *To Follow the Lamb Wheresoever He Goeth: The Ecclesial Polity of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1640-1660* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 228 pages. ISBN: 978-1498209014.

Ian Birch, Principal of the Scottish Baptist College, has provided us with an important work exploring the ecclesiology of the Particular Baptist churches in England as they developed their understanding of who they were, especially in distinction to the English Presbyterians and the Episcopal Church in England.

The author demonstrates a mastery of many original resources and moves beyond previous works by other authors to explore in detail the theology out of which the Calvinistic Baptist ecclesiology emerged. Throughout the book, Birch argues that the Calvinistic Baptist overarching theology of the Lordship of Christ shapes their view of how the true church should be.

The exploration of the development of the theology of the gathering community of believers we know as the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey congregation, pastored later by John Spilsbury, is the building block for this work, which also explores in forensic fashion the confession of 1644. Out of this Birch explores important issues of ecclesiology, including the development of the baptism of believers, the practice of Communion, the authority of the Church and the theological justification for separation from the State. Also explored are the imposition of punishment and practices such as shunning for the purposes of establishing a pure church. This is contrasted with the programme of the Westminster Assembly of Divines seeking a national church with parishes. The practice of ministry is also explored, with the accent in this period on local ministry drawn out of the congregation, as Christ was 'the true minister'. Birch goes on to explore the development of the theology of interdependency through associationalism.

The author builds on earlier research of the late Barrie White over against the views of Jim McClendon, Ernest A. Payne and Glen Stassen. Unfortunately, Birch describes Glen Stassen as a Mennonite (page 75), which is incorrect. His Baptist pedigree is nowhere in doubt!

This book is an important addition to studies of the development of Baptist ecclesiology and, although this reviewer would take issue with Dr Birch on influences prevalent amongst early English Particular Baptists, his

insights into Calvinistic Baptist Church life in the period from 1640 are very important.

Reviewed by Keith G. Jones

Derek Tidball, *Lead like Joshua: Lessons for Today* (London: IVP, 2017), 169 pages. ISBN: 978-1783595549.

“Not another book on leadership?” Tidball anticipates this response to his latest publication by stating his rationale at the outset. He aims to address what he identifies as a significant lacuna in contemporary leadership training: the lack of serious engagement with biblical material. He also notes the complex ‘management speak’ of many contemporary books on leadership and their failure to relate to ‘the everyday down-to-earth realities of church life’. This little book aims to teach basic leadership principles ‘that will stand all leaders in good stead for the long haul’ (p.viii). Sourced in the experiences and character of Joshua, it goes a long way to achieving the author’s objectives. The target audience is ‘those starting out in church leadership, either as lay leaders or as young pastors’ (p.vii). Tidball is eminently qualified to write on this subject, having considerable personal leadership experience in different contexts – including pastoral ministry and various roles within theological education. His rich repository of personal and practical experience is evident throughout this book.

Twenty-three chapters address key leadership terminology and concepts, as their headings indicate: ‘Assume responsibility’, ‘Renew vision’, ‘Mentor others’, ‘Face failure’, ‘Guard unity’. These principles and their application emerge naturally from the text. Hence the strength of this little book: its consistently biblical focus. At the same time, Tidball notes some continuity between biblical leadership language and that of secular leadership. He therefore takes the opportunity to draw lessons and illustrations from leaders in various secular contexts – from Alex Ferguson to Rudolph Giuliani, from Abraham Lincoln to Margaret Thatcher.

One stimulating chapter, entitled ‘Recall history’, is based on Joshua 4-5. The placing of memorial stones (4.21-24) may strike the modern reader as quaint, yet the incident illustrates an important principle. Effective leaders articulate the story, and through example seek to inspire others. As a leader, Joshua experienced and indeed embodied the story – ‘not perfectly ... but admirably in the way he lived and led’ (p.46). Tidball notes how Barak Obama’s victory speech captured the aspirations of many Americans by telling the story of Ann Nixon Cooper, a 106-year old black American who had cast her vote in Atlanta. Obama not only skilfully articulated the story – he embodied it. As Tidball concludes, ‘Ours is a salvation that outshines any

national story', and our articulation of the story of our salvation 'is what keeps us on track' (p.49).

As Tidball rightly points out, the primary purpose of the book of Joshua is not to provide a textbook on leadership, but to testify to the faithfulness of God. However, his reflections on Joshua's practice of leadership present many useful lessons for those about to embark on this challenging journey, and for those already on their way.

Reviewed by Sarah Dalrymple

John Patton, *Pastor as Counselor: Wise Presence, Sacred Conversation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), 132 pages. ISBN: 978-1630886905.

The premise of this book is that the 'minister who is not specially trained in mental health counseling can offer wise presence and spiritual conversation to persons who are in some way separated and lost from significant persons and places'. The pastor to the 'lost sheep' can help the counselee to make choices and changes in his or her own life in these situations. With the idea of 'relational wisdom' at its centre, the book sets out to give instruction on how to conduct pastoral counselling sessions.

Thus, each chapter is designed to outline how the pastoral counselling sessions should function. After introducing the central themes in chapter 1, Patton describes the first and second meetings in chapters 2 and 3, providing advice on basic counselling skills. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with family and 'family-like' situations. He discusses the format and focus of premarital conversations, and explores problems of addictions, sexual abuse, and marital stress.

Patton, who has a wealth of experience in both pastoral practice and teaching, offers helpful guidance on how to conduct these meetings in a relational yet structured way. He repeatedly urges the reader to focus on feelings arising from problems, rather than on the problems themselves. His advice against taking notes on the grounds that to do so might objectify the person is characteristic of the relational emphasis of the book as a whole. The role of the pastor is not to solve problems but to convey that the counselee is loved by God. For example, when he discusses dealing with marital stress, he warns against trying to save the marriage and advises focusing on 'being present in the family pain'. He discusses when it is appropriate to refer the counselees on to specialist therapists.

The style is rather didactic and prescriptive: the words 'the pastor should' and 'the pastor ought' are used too often for my taste. So too, the crucial idea of relational wisdom is in danger of being eclipsed by the

emphasis on planning and structure. More importantly, it cannot be assumed that simply because the person has a pastoral role he or she possesses 'relational wisdom' at all. The place of experience and character formation is not explored. At a purely practical level, however, those new to pastoral counselling will find this non-academic book a helpful well from which to draw.

Reviewed by Marion Carson

Shusaku Endo, *Silence* (London: Marylebone House, 2016), 304 pages. ISBN: 978-1910674277.

Having lived and worked in the Middle East at a time when the Christian community and churches were being targeted by Islamic State and other radical groups, Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence* provided a very timely foil for me for the disturbing question of where God is in the midst of the suffering of His people. For those involved in Christian mission *Silence* should be required reading, because it moves the discussions from the heroic pronouncements of 'reaching the world for Christ' while enjoying the benefits of Constantinian Christianity in the West, to the reality of evil and suffering in parts of the world that have been historically resistant to the Gospel. Rather than repeating the narrative, and thus spoiling the reading of the novel, I will instead highlight one specific issue the book raises, which is central to missions in countries with a high risk of persecution.

Rarely has the moral responsibility of the missionary and the mission agency towards the nationals they convert been discussed. In countries where persecution is real, what is the moral responsibility of the foreigner missionary when nationals who have come to faith in Christ are persecuted? Endo does not shy away from this question as he portrays the spiritual and mental turmoil of one of the Italian priests who is forced to watch Japanese Christians being tortured and killed. Somehow the persecutors understood the psychology of the missionaries who saw themselves as heroic figures who were even willing to become martyrs for the faith. They also understood that they could inflict unbearable torment on the missionary if the people they had shepherded were tortured in front of their eyes. The torment would be enough for them to leave the mission field, to renounce their faith, or to doubt their calling as priests.

Interwoven with this question is the personal response of missionaries in the face of persecution. How much physical and mental suffering is tolerable before one betrays Christ? Is the act of stepping on the image of Christ in a painting an act of betrayal? Is there redemption after betrayal – would God have forgiven and restored Judas if he had repented, as He did Peter?

As a good novelist, Endo portrays the reality of life and does not seek to tie up all the loose ends by the end of the narrative. So, what about the silence of God that persecuted Christians encounter in the midst of the horrors of torture and death? In *Silence* God speaks, 'I was not silent. I suffered beside you'. This is a mystery that can only be understood by those who have experienced suffering when God was seemingly silent. Endo has managed to communicate a theology about God, human suffering, personal responsibility, and faith that few books of theology have been able to.

Reviewed by Rupen Das

Frank Rees (ed.), *Baptist Identity into the 21st Century: Essays in Honour of Ken Manley* (Melbourne: Whitley College, 2016), 228 pages. ISBN: 978-0646957067.

Through our involvement with the Baptist World Alliance many of us have come to know and appreciate Ken Manley, Australia's foremost Baptist historian, and widely respected as an outstanding scholar, pastor, preacher, and teacher. This excellent contribution to Baptist Studies by some of those who have known him as friend and colleague builds on his writing and teaching to 'offer a vision of Baptist identity into the future'.

Taken as a whole, this collection of essays seems to this reviewer to capture for Baptist identity the essence of Kierkegaard's famous dictum that 'life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forward', in that the roots of our identity are examined and affirmed in order to challenge contemporary Baptists to consider some bold thinking and direction for the future.

The methodology adopted here is commendable. Key themes drawn on from Manley's life and ministry are engaged with by way of a longer essay followed by shorter responses. These themes include Baptist identity as whole, lessons from our history, reading the Bible, women in ministry, preaching, mission in the Australian context, Baptists on the global stage, and theological education. Both in the selection of authors and the treatment of these themes there is a healthy dialectic between the Australian context and the wider concerns for global Baptists.

There is a heartfelt plea from the distinguished trio of Brian Haymes, Neville Callam, and Keith Clements that our Baptist future cannot be lived in isolation from the Church as a whole, and so we should embrace our ecumenical involvement with much more conviction and commitment than we have done in the past.

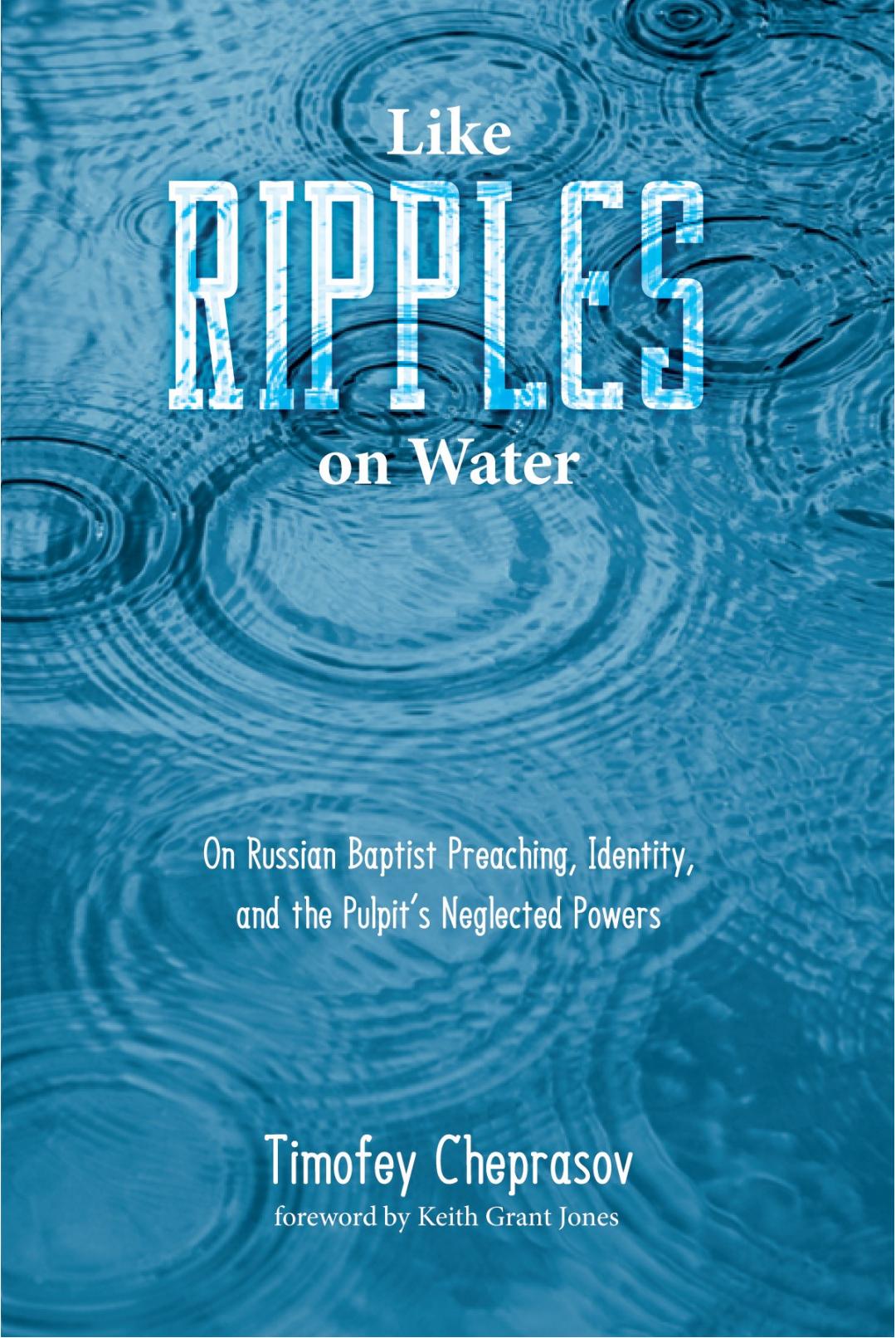
There is a fascinating dialogue between Ross Clifford and Tim Costello on the future of Baptist mission; their perspectives differ but they

are agreed that mission must happen in the light of the Resurrection, when for Baptists it so often stops at the foot of the Cross.

As a European I found fascinating Mark Brett's article, and the responses to it, on Old Testament motifs used by the colonists in their attitude to the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia. The hermeneutical considerations involved are not irrelevant to questions of migration today.

There are many more riches here to be explored, and I commend this set of essays to all who are prepared to draw on the roots of our identity to confront the challenges of our Baptist future.

Reviewed by Tony Peck



Like
RIPPLES
on Water

On Russian Baptist Preaching, Identity,
and the Pulpit's Neglected Powers

Timofey Cheprasov
foreword by Keith Grant Jones

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We congratulate our former PhD student Timofey Cheprasov on the recent publication of the results of his PhD research.